

Spartans Never Die

by AlphaGuardian

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Summary: After Carter sacrifices himself to ensure that Nobles 4 and 6 can deliver a package to the Pillar of Autumn, Six receives a transmission with no one on the other end. When he traces it, he is lead to the Scarab that Carter destroyed. What he finds there takes him, Emile and an old friend on a journey to stop the Covenant. Starts at the end of Reach, jumps to halo 2 and ends with H4

1. Chapter 1

Spartans Never Die By: AlphaGuardian

Chapter 1: End of the Road

Planet Reach, August 30, 2552, Near Azzod Shipyards.

Carter, S-259, Noble 1, looked out of the viewport of his critically damaged Pelican dropship and saw Covenant assault platform, or Scarab, near where he knew that Nobles 4 and 6 were. He knew they would not be able to outrun it; they had left the Mongoose ATV they were driving behind when they had entered the cave they were in now, and they didn't have the firepower to destroy it, which left only one option.

Noble 4, Emile saw a comm channel open from Carter, "Noble 1 to Nobles 4 and 6, you've got company." "What kind of company?" his last remaining teammate on the ground, Noble Six, said. Emile looked up and saw Scarab bearing down on them. He keyed the comm channel "We can handle it, sir." "Not without my help."

Noble Six was worried. Here he was carrying an unknown AI which Dr. Halsey, the genius behind the SPARTAN program, had called "Humanity's best chance for survival", and he couldn't get it to where it needed to be, the UNSC _Pillar of Autumn_. He looked at the Scarab, and then saw something out of the corner of his eye; Carter was flying his

Pelican on a collision course for the Scarab. He knew Carter would not survive; he had been wounded when a Fuel Rod explosive had detonated in front of the dropship, the detonation had caused a large shard of glass from the viewport to puncture his armor just above his ribcage. He saw the Scarab start to power up its main plasma cannon, and knew he was about to fail his mission.

Six was about to key the comm channel when he heard Carter say, "You're on your own, Noble, Carter out." The dropship hurtled into the Scarab and impacted, the force detonating the fuel reserves in the Pelican as well as the reactor in the Scarab, destroying the dropship and causing the Scarab to collapse and blow up.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2: Pillar of Autumn

Planet Reach, August 30, 2552, Azzod Shipyard

Noble Six saw a comm channel open in his HUD; it was from the _Pillar of Autumn_, "Noble Four, this is Captain Keyes of the UNSC_ Pillar of Autumn_; I can't wait much longer for that package, what's your ETA to the shipyard?" "We're here, Captain. Just say where we need to be and we'll be there."

He didn't hear Captain Keyes' response because an Elite General blindsided him. The General pulled an energy dagger and prepared to stab him, but a blade appeared through its throat and the Elite was unceremoniously thrown aside. Emile had saved his life. "Come on Six, we have to get to Platform Delta ASAP."

He noticed that the container holding the AI had broken. He put the chip in his helmet, remarking, "The captain won't be pleased to see this." "He'll be pleased to see me in one piece." He heard the voice through his helmet speakers, but couldn't find the comm channel. "Who said that?" Emile looked at him and cocked his head questioningly, "who said what?" The voice spoke again, saying "Me, of course. I'm Cortana, the package Dr. Halsey gave you." "Good to know." He looked at Emile, "it was the package, an AI called Cortana." "We need to get moving, Six."

When Six looked at the General that had nearly killed him, he saw Emile's kukri sticking out of its throat. "Don't you want your knife?" Emile walked over to the Elite and pulled his kukri from its resting place. "I do, now let's go." Six noticed a comm channel in his visor, but heard nothing. Emile looked at him, "Six, what's up?" "Nothing, just a comm channel with no one on the other end." "Strange, but we need to keep moving, the Captain's already at the platform. We're not."

They hurried to the platform and found Keyes waiting on a Pelican. "Good to see you, Spartans. I'm sorry about the deaths of your teammates. They'll be remembered. Where's the package?" Before Six could pull the chip out of his helmet, the comm system in the Pelican chimed, "_Pillar of Autumn_ to Captain Keyes, we've got a CCS Class Cruiser moving to intercept our escape." Captain Keyes pulled out a small pipe and twirled it in his fingers. "Alright then. Spartans, there's a Mass Driver Cannon on the other side of this complex, one of you needs to man it and take that Cruiser down."

Before Six could say anything, Emile walked up and put a hand on his shoulder, "I'll man the Cannon, you get to the _Autumn_ and get out of here." Emile sprinted to the Cannon and manned it before Six could say anything. Six keyed the comm channel to Emile. He used the team frequency even though no one else was alive to hear it, "Good luck, Emile, Six out."

The ghost channel popped up again, except this time Six could see that it was on the team frequency. It sounded garbled and filled with static, but it was there, "â€|One toâ€|Six â€|read?" "Cortana, can you trace the source of that transmission?" "Already on it. I'll mark it on your HUD when I find it." About ten seconds later, an arrow appeared on Six's HUD. He overlaid a map of the area on it, and found that the signal was coming from a position just south of where Carter had sacrificed himself to destroy the Scarab.

****Authors Note-** Sorry for the short first chapter and lack of AN on 1****st**** chapter. I did not know how to add AN's until after I had published the chapter. On the topic of the short chapter, I was going to add more but I didn't want to give anything away, but if you read the summary, you may have already guessed what was going to happen anyway. I will try to update at least once every 2 weeks but I don't have access to the internet all the time. Again, sorry for the short chapter and lack of author notes.**

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Revelation

Planet Reach, August 30, 2552, Azzod Shipyard, Landing Platform
Delta, 1930 Hours

Six keyed the comm channel to Emile, who was operating the Mass Driver Cannon in order to destroy a CCS-Class Cruiser that was blocking the UNSC _Pillar of Autumn_'s escape from Reach, "Emile, it's Six. That ghost comm channel I told you about, Cortana just traced it, and found that it came from about where we encountered that Scarab." "Yeah, so what, exactly?" "I think it might be Carter." "There's no way he survived that." "There's no one else who has access to our team comm channel. It has to be him."

Captain Keyes walked over. "Spartan, we need to leave now if we want to get out of here without becoming glass." Six turned and looked at the Captain. "I have reason to believe that my commander is alive. I need to stay and find him." "Alright, Spartan, I'll leave one of my Pelicans here in case you do find him, but it will leave in one standard hour. Along with the _Autumn_. After that, you need to find another ride."

Cortana took over Six's PA system, "Captain, Covenant dropships on approach, Phantom-Class. They appear to be aiming for the Mass Driver." Six keyed the comm to Emile, "Emile, you've got company!" "Roger, Six." Six looked to where the Phantoms were coming in from and saw three that were in a straight line go up in flames right after he heard a bang from the Cannon. Two more were destroyed by the explosion and three more bought the farm from the debris. "Six, go look for Carter, I'll handle this."

Six removed Cortana's chip from his helmet and handed it to the Captain. Keyes took it and held out his other hand, "Good luck, Noble, I hope you find your commander." Six shook his hand, then saluted as Keyes walked back into the dropship. As the dropship lifted off, Six stooped down, picked up his MA-37 Assault Rifle and DMR then walked off to find Sierra- 259.

As Captain Keyes walked into the crew compartment of the Pelican, the Marines all looked at him. One stood up and said, "Sir, was it right to just send him off on his own?" Keyes looked at him and said "He's a Spartan. Spartans never die." "I know that, Sir, but shouldn't we have at least sent a few Marines to help him, and a Falcon in case his commander is wounded and can't walk back to the pad?" Keyes looked the young Corporal dead in the eyes and said, "Normally I would call that insubordination," The Corporal's face drained of all color. "but in this case, you're right. When we get back to the Autumn I'll have Falcons ready to bring them to the landing pad."

****Authors Notes-** I have a question for all you reading out there: what do you want to see in the story? Characters? Places? Events? Do you want the story to extend beyond the end of Halo 3? PM me your ideas for the story and I will see what I can do. No guarantees, but I will try. Also, this may be my last frequent update. I may not have a consistent WI-FI network to upload from. Sorry. But like I said after chapter 2, I will try to update at least once every 2 weeks. Please rate and review: this is my first fanfic, and I want to know how I am doing. Be as honest as necessary without flaming. Chapter 4 Comes As Soon as I Finish It. Which is, if I have WI-FI, tomorrow, 8-5-13.**

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Noble 1

Noble Six arrived at the destroyed Scarab. What he saw made him doubt that Carter had survived: the Pelican's fore section was imbedded in the Scarab, and the rest was justâ€ gone. There were no parts lying around. Six keyed the comm system, "Commander, this is Noble Six; I'm at the crash site. Where are you?" He could hear a faint reply, but couldn't make out any words. "Commander, I didn't copy. Say again." This time he could hear the reply, "Six, this is Carter, I'm in the cockpit of the Pelican, but the door's jammed, and I can't get it open with one arm." "One arm, sir? How bad are your injuries?" "My left arm and right leg are broken, and I have multiple broken ribs. My biometer was fried in the explosion so I can't tell you anything else for certain."

Another comm channel opened in Six's visor, "Noble Six, this is Captain Keyes; we have a group of Falcons en route to extract you and your commander and return you to the landing pad. Noble Four is with the Falcons and a group of marines to assist in exfil." "Thank you, sir." Six climbed the wrecked Scarab and reached the fore section of the Pelican, pried open the cockpit door, and walked in. "Good to see you, Six. I thought you had left before I contacted you the first time." "Commander, There is a group of Falcons about," He checked his map. "a minute out, we are going to get you to the Pillar of Autumn, and we'll get you patched up and back to combat-ready."

Another comm channel opened, this time from a different source, "Noble Six, this is Captain Andrew Del Rio of the UNSC Antietam. We were assigned by the Office of Naval Intelligence to aid the Autumn however we could. The Falcons Captain Keyes sent are still taking you to the landing pad, but we have a Pelican on the landing pad to bring you to our ship, and we'll take you and your team back to Earth for medical treatment." "Copy, Captain."

Six helped Carter up out of the pilot's seat of the Pelican, careful not to jar Carter's arm or leg against anything, and led him out to the edge of the debris. "Six, how do you suppose we're going to get down?" Six looked up and saw the Falcons coming in. "We're not." He grabbed a flare from one of his pockets and ignited it, signaling his position to the Falcons. "Six, it's Emile. We see the flare and are coming in to pick you up. How's Carter?" "He's alive, but his left arm and right leg are broken and his biometer's fried, so I don't know anything else." One of the Falcons broke off from the rest and headed toward the wreckage. When it came to a hover near the remains of the Pelican, Six helped Carter in, and when he was, Emile keyed the comm to the pilot, "let's go, Lieutenant. Back to the platform."

When they returned to the platform, a man who looked like a Captain stepped out, but he wore the insignia of a Commander, like Carter. "Good to see you, Spartans. Tom Laskey, Second Officer on the Antietam. Never thought I'd see Spartans up close and in person. We should get going, the Captain is expecting you two," he pointed at Emile and Six. "and he wants you, Commander to report immediately to the medbay for assessment." The Pelican lifted off as the group entered, taking them to the Antietam. When they arrived in the hangar bay, a group of medical technicians helped Carter to the Medbay while Laskey, Emile, and Six went to the bridge to see Captain Del Rio.

****Authors Notes-** We're almost to the "good" parts of the book. I'm thinking chapter 7 is where I'll begin the H2 part of the book, but it may begin as early as chapter 6. Depends on how long the next part takes. What do you guys think of the book? What do you like about it? What don't you like? What do you want to see in the book? To adapt a quote from the Prophet of Truth: "Your enjoyment of this book is the will of the Gods. And Iâ€¦ I am their instrument." Please rate and review, and PM me your ideas for the book.**

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Recovery

****Authors Caution-** This chapter is a recount of the events of Halo: Reach, save for Lone Wolf, and the end of Pillar of Autumn, obviously. This will be very boring. Please bear with me. The real action starts next chapter. Now to the Notes. I have read your reviews, both of them, and Jun will be included later on in the book. Please, please, please, review. Rate as well, but mostly review. Thanks. Also, do you want Noble team to stay on Earth after the New Mombasa Slipspace Event and go through the events of H3: ODST with the Squad, or do you want them to go with John to Delta Halo? PM or review with your opinions and I will tally the votes and post results in the AN's of the chapter before Regret leaves Earth. Also, I need Beta-Readers. It would be greatly appreciated. I need criticizers

more than anything right now. Also we have topped 600 views. Yay! I never expected the book to be this popular in just 5 days. Thank you for your support. Please rate and review.**

When the group entered the bridge of the Antietam, everyone turned to look. Noble Six felt more than a little nervous about having so much notice. Captain Del Rio turned to address the group. "Commander Laskey, return to your station. Spartans, follow me." Laskey turned and walked over to one of the terminals. The Spartans followed the Captain to his personal quarters for debriefing. When they arrived, Captain Del Rio motioned the two Spartans to sit on the other side of his desk.

"Noble Four, tell me what happened on Reach." "Sir, Six would be able to better relate the events than me." "Very well. Noble Six, tell me what happened." "Sir, It all started with an investigation into the disabling of the Visegrad Relay Outpost, which our Commander, Colonel Holland, believed was disabled by Insurrectionists. When we were investigating the area around the outpost, due to a group of farmers saying that 'something in the fields, killed their son', we were engaged by a small patrol of Grunts and Skirmishers. After advancing further up to find a group of missing UNSC Army Troopers, we were engaged by a group of four Elite Ultras. We eventually found the troopers, and aided them in holding off multiple Spirit and Phantom dropships dropping off waves of troops."

"After we held them off, two Falcons came and extracted us, Me, Carter and Jorge, Noble 5, and took us to the Relay, where Kat, Noble 2, and Emile here were trying to cut through the inner door to the entrance to the Outpost, during which they were holding off more Covenant forces. After we landed and fought off more covenant, Kat managed to get the door opened, and we all, save Jun, Noble 3, entered the Outpost. Inside, we found a group of troopers that had been attacked and split by Elites. Jorge found a civilian scientist, and I found an encrypted data chip of some sort. The wires had been burned by plasma weaponry and were rendered inoperable. We were shortly thereafter attacked by a group of Elite Zealots, and in the skirmish I was nearly killed by one, saved by the actions of Carter. Me and Jorge were sent to find and kill the Zealots, while the rest stayed behind. After we had secured the station, I reset a junction that Kat wanted me to and returned to where we were ambushed. We then left the relay."

"The team was then diverted from our then-present course to ONI: Sword Base to repel a Covenant attack on the base. Kat and I were dropped to repel the assault on the front doors of the base. After that, we were sent to activate a radio antenna and an AA Gun. Once we had done that, were directed back to Sword Base because the covenant had found another way into the base. I was directed to help Emile repel Phantoms and Banshees that were landing troops through a breach in the walls. After that, we met with Dr. Catherine Halsey, who turned out to be Jorge's mother, to discuss the recent events at the Visegrad Relay Outpost. Kat gave her the data chip that was found on one of the bodies."

"Jun and I were then sent to recon a covenant held area called the "Dark Zone", where our recon satellites could not see. We encountered resistance before we reached the Zone, and we helped defend a group of militia that had not evacuated. They were defending cases of weapons that had been smuggled into the facility. They then showed us

a route to a hydro-electric plant through a riverbed because the main gate did not work. Near the plant, we found the source of the dark zone, a covenant pylon which created a field that disallows any UNSC scanning equipment. While Jun set up an explosive charge to destroy it, me and the militia defended him against a pair of Hunters and a team of Spec-Ops Elites. Pushing further into the Dark Zone, we found a Covenant Corvette and a huge landing zone where the Covenant were deploying their troops. Kat recalled all teams and told us to prepare for the next day."

"After our recon mission, Noble Team helped a Marine force destroy 2 AA guns to clear the way to another pylon. Once we had neutralized the AA gun, Jorge and I boarded a Falcon and went to find a pylon that was protecting the area from our forces. The Falcon was disabled as it crossed the energy field and crashed, killing all but me and Jorge. We neutralized the shield around the pylon and were extracted shortly before the pylon was shot by a MAC round from the Grafton. Shortly afterward, the ship was split in two by a Glassing Beam from a Covenant Assault Carrier."

"Noble Team regrouped in a cave nearby. Kat devised a plan to go to the Sabre program launch facility and send two of us to help destroy the Carrier. Since I was a Sabre test pilot, I was chosen, and Jorge went with me to infiltrate a Corvette that was to go to the Carrier to refuel. We planned to use a Slipspace drive to destroy the corvette and Carrier remotely, but during a firefight in the corvette's hangar bay, the timer on the "bomb" and the dropship's engines were damaged. Jorge stayed behind and manually detonated the bomb after he threw me out of the hangar bay. Moments after the bomb detonated, a massive Covenant fleet entered the system."

"I landed near the city of New Alexandria. After hiking to the city, I linked up with Marines evacuating civilians to Traxus Towers. During the evacuation, I helped a group of ODST's clear a landing pad for us. Once we had gotten the civilians evacuated, I assisted a group of marines in activating a pair of AA missile batteries to defend the evac transports against a corvette that was destroying them as they left."

After I had deterred the corvette from returning, I was reunited with Noble Team, and we helped in defending more evac transports and destroying Covenant Jammers throughout the city. Afterwards, we regrouped in the ONI tower to assess the situation, but as Carter contacted Colonel Holland, the Covenant began glassing the city. As we ran for the radiation bunker to shield us from the beam, an Elite Field Marshall, from a Spirit dropship, shot Kat in the head with a Needle Rifle. We descended into the bunker, and emerged to find the city in ruins."

"Per the Winter Contingency, any data on the location of any of the Inner Colonies or Earth was to be wiped or destroyed, and Sword Base had a lot of it, and not enough time to get rid of it all. Noble Team was called back to Sword Base to destroy it, but when we got to the area where we were to plant the bomb, we were called to a different area by an unknown AI with a very high security clearance level. It turned out that Dr. Halsey had ordered the destruction of the Base so that she could deliver to us a package for the Pillar of Autumn. She said that the package, an AI, had chosen me to take it to the Autumn in the Azzod Shipyards."

When we left the facility, Jun was to take Dr. Halsey to Castle Base, While Carter, Emile and I went to Azzod to deliver the AI. During the journey to the shipyard, we were attacked by a group of Banshees, and Carter was critically wounded when a Fuel Rod explosive detonated in front of the dropship. And you know the rest." Captain Del Rio furrowed his brow a bit. "I do, Noble. Thank you. Now leave me, I need to file a report to FLEEDCOM. And we'll reach Earth in about 1 day." "Sir, before we leave, is there any word on the Autumn or Carter's condition?" "The Autumn just jumped to Slipspace about 5 minutes ago, and your commander is stable. He'll recover, with proper medical attention, in about 3 days, which is quite fast for the extent of his injuries, but he is a Spartan, so I shouldn't be surprised." "Thank you, Captain" Nobles 4 and 6 saluted and left to go see their commander."

****Author's Notes (Cont.)** Chapter 5 is finally done! And that means that the Reach part is over as well! That chapter was one of the hardest to write because it took so long. If you are reading this, then that means that you hung in there and read the chapter, or just skipped over it and came down here to read this. If you read, thank you for bearing with me. If you didn't, oh, well, your choice. This is my last frequent update as well. The updates will now come about once a week. Sorry. (This chapter is exactly 1682 words longâ€¦ugh.)**

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6- Cairo Station

****Authors Note-** I know I said last chapter that Carter would recover in a few days, but I had not done my research and didn't realize that it took nearly 3 months for John to return to Earth. Sorry.**

Earth Defense Station-Cairo, October 22, 2552

As Nobles 1, 4 and 6, along with a Spartan II they knew only as the Master Chief, and a Marine Sergeant-Major, Johnson, walked into the bridge of the station, Six, the closest to the Chief, heard him remark to the Sergeant that he had "told him that there wouldn't be any cameras." Johnson remarked that the Chief had told him that he was going to wear something nice, that folks needed heroes, and to smile while they still had something to smile about. Noble 1 was completely recovered from his injuries after nearly a month, but his armor was destroyed and he had received a new set of Mark VI armor, save for the helmet which was repaired and given back to him.

In the center of the bridge, a man by the name of Lord Hood stood, watching them approach. When they arrived, an officer handed him a red-clothed case with 9 medals, all the same, in it. The Spartans and Johnson all saluted at once. Lord Hood looked at each of them individually. "Gentleman, we're lucky to have you all back." Carter looked up at him. "Sir, not everyone." "Of course, Noble 1. They'll be remembered." An officer walked up and whispers something in Hood's ear. He turned to a pedestal nearby. "Go ahead, Cortana." An AI avatar appeared on the pedestal; the same one that Six had delivered to the Pillar of Autumn nearly 3 months ago. "Another whisper, sir, near Io, we have probes enroute. Also, we have detected a lone Phantom dropship on approach to the station. It appears heavily damaged and its weapon systems have been deliberately taken offline."

Lord Hood looked curiously at an image of the dropship. "Could it be a scouting party?" "No, it seems it is deliberately trying to be noticed." An officer looked up at Hood. "Sir, there's a transmission coming from that dropship. It's one of ours." "Patch that signal through, Lieutenant." "Aye, sir." He pressed a few buttons and an audio signal was heard. It was too patchy to get a clear interpretation of the voice, but the words were understandable: "This is Spartan A-266 on a stolen Phantom dropship enroute to Earth. The dropship is damaged and I have disabled the weapons systems onboard. Request permission to land on Earth Defense Platform Cairo." Noble Team looked up, amazed at who was sending the signal. Carter got his voice back first. "Sir, Spartan 266 is one of my men, Jun, Noble 3."

Lord Hood looked at him, then back at the Lieutenant. He moved to the console and keyed the comm. "Spartan 266, this is Lord Hood on the Cairo; you are cleared to land in hangar bay 7. There are some people here who would like to see you." "thank you, Lord Hood. 266 out." Lord Hood turned to Noble Team. "Noble, go to the hangar and meet up with him, he'll want to see you." The three III's saluted to him in unison, then left the bridge.

When they arrived in the bay, the Phantom had already touched down, and Jun was just dropping out of the gravity lift. There was a squad of marines around the dropship, but when they saw the Spartan, they stood down and saluted. Jun saluted back and looked around when he saw the remainder of Noble Team walking up to him. He walked up to them and Carter extended his hand to Jun. "Good to see at least part of the team survived." "it's good to see you too, Jun. Let's go to the bridge; Lord Hood is expecting us."

****Author's Notes (Cont.)-** Jun is back by popular demand! I feel like crap for forgetting about him. Also, before I posted chapter 5, I was reading the reviews and someone (I forget the pen name, sorry.) said that they wanted the team to go with the Master Chief to Delta Halo. Keep in mind I had not posted the chapter yet and as such had not asked the question about whether you wanted them to go or stay. Weird, right? It's like they read my mind or something. Anyway, as always, rate and review, and thanks for reading. Chapter 7 is going to have the events from the level Cairo Station in it, so there will finally be some action. The chapters are going to include the events from the respective levels in it. Chapter 8 will have Outskirts, Chapter 9 Metropolis, and so on. Also, do you want any of the Spartans to go with the Arbiter after the Gravemind encounter, or do you want them all to go with the Chief? PM or review with your ideas and I will tally the votes. I still need beta-readers. And more reviews. And I leave you with that.**

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7- Gift Giving

****Author's Note-** You will understand the title of the chapter at the end, or if you've already played Halo 2. For now enjoy the sort-of novelization of Cairo Station. Rate and Review, as always. P.S. there is at least one comedic part in every chapter from now on. I just kind of put them in. Also, the chapters will be very long at this point, but there is a lot of action. One more thing, look for the running gag in this chapter. It is quite obvious. P.P.S. Expect

delays in the updates. I have to work on summer homework, and I'm not going to start Chapter 8 until it's finished. Chapter 8 should be out in about 2-3 weeks, after that, the updates will come about once a week, as promised. Rate and Review. Please. Do it now, this is very important. "Your enjoyment of this book is the will of the Gods. And Iâ€¦ I am their instrument."**

Noble Team returned to the bridge of the Earth Defense Platform Cairo. Inside, they found Lord Hood, Sgt. Johnson, a woman they did not know, and the Master Chief waiting for them. When they walked up, Lord Hood turned to them and saluted. They saluted back. Just then, alarms started going off all over the station, and Cortana's avatar appeared on the pedestal again. "Slipspace ruptures; directly off our battle cluster." Lord Hood turned to look at her. "Show me." An overlay of the area appeared on the viewscreen. "15 Covenant capital ships holding position just outside the kill zone." A new group appeared. Under the largest ship, the name F.A. Harper appeared. "This is Fleet Admiral Harper, we are engaging the enemy." "Negative, Admiral. Form a defensive perimeter around the cluster." He looked at the Covenant force onscreen, puzzled. "Something's not right; the fleet that destroyed Reach was fifty times this size."

An officer looked up at him. "Sir, additional contacts: boarding craft and lots of them!" "They're going to try to take our MAC guns offline; give their capital ships a straight shot at Earth." He turned to the woman. "Commander, get to your ship. Link up with the fleet." She saluted and left. He turned to the pedestal. "You have the MAC gun, Cortana. Soon as they come in range, open up." "Gladly" Her avatar disappeared. Hood turned to the Spartans. "Spartans, the Office of Naval Intelligence has requested that the 5 of you become one unit, under their command. You will become one unit, but under my command. You are now Bravo Team. Master Chief, you are the leader. Now take your team and defend this station." The Chief saluted. "Yes sir." He turned to Johnson. "We need weapons." "Right this way."

He led the team to an armory station where they found a whole host of weapons. Bravo 1, the Master Chief, took a BR55 Battle Rifle and 2 M7 Caseless Sub-Machine Guns. Bravo 2, Carter, took an MA5B Assault Rifle and an M6C Pistol. Bravo 3, Jun, took an SRS-99C-S2-AMB Sniper Rifle and an M7 Caseless SMG. Emile, Bravo 4, took an M90 Tactical Shotgun and an M6C Pistol. And Six, Bravo 5, took an M395 DMR and an MA5B Assault Rifle. The Chief looked at his new team. "Check your ammo. Make sure you've got all you can carry. You may not find anymore." They all grabbed at least 4 more clips of ammo for each of their weapons, then left to join Sgt. Johnson.

They found Johnson setting up an HMG near a sealed doorway. He turned as they approached. "Chief; just heard some combat on the other side of that door." Just then, they heard a crackling sound and saw what looked like a torch cutting through the door. The Master Chief signaled Jun to stay back, and for the rest to pick an area and stay there. Johnson spoke up. "Field of fire on that bulkhead. Soon as that door opens; let 'em have it." About 5 seconds later, the door blew open and a group of 4 Grunts and an Elite Minor rushed through the door. Before the Elite got 2 feet into the room, his head exploded as a 14.5X114 mm AP-FS-DS round passed through. The Grunts panicked, threw down their weapons, and ran in circles. Carter and Emile ran up, drew their combat knives, and stabbed the Grunts through their methane sacks. Six, or rather Five, shot the methane sack of a Grunt with his DMR, and the Master Chief snapped the last

ones neck.

Another group, this one containing a Major instead of a Minor, stormed through the door. This time though, the Elite did not have his head blown off an instant after he stepped through the door. As Jun was lining up his next shot, Emile jumped on the Elite's back, drew his kukri, and plunged it into the back of the Elite's head. He jumped off, drew his shotgun and shot 2 Grunts through their methane sacks. The other Grunts panicked and ran away, only to return as 2 Elite Minors entered the room through one of the upper levels. Six ran up and tackled one of the Minors, then drew his knife and stabbed it twice in the neck. "That's for Kat and Jorge." The Chief had already done away with the other, and the Grunts were long since gone.

They then left the room and moved on towards the port Pelican bay, where there was reported to be a breach. They had already killed a slew of Covenant and when they arrived in the bay, 5 Grunts turned and all at once yelled, "Demons, here! Run for your lives!" As they ran, the Major commanding them backhanded one across the face. "Hold ranks, you fools." Just then, his head exploded as another 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round passed through. Jun laughed through the team comm channel. "Hah. Idiots. They should have been focused on us instead." The Grunts, including the two that had run from the first encounter, all pulled out plasma grenades, ignited them, and ran at the Spartans. Six shot the one in the middle with his DMR and the grenades it was holding flew out and stuck to the two beside him. When they blew up, the other two died as well. The Spartans turned to look at him, amazed at the shot. Six opened up a team-wide comm channel. "What? I'm a crack shot with a DMR."

The Master Chief just shook his head disbelievingly and moved toward the viewport where a group of marines were watching the battle outside. One of them remarked, "Hey, check it out, the Malta's already driven off its boarders." One of the marines on the Malta said over the comm, "I don't believe it. They're retreating, we won." Those were his last words, because just then, the station blew up spontaneously. The same marine who had remarked about the Malta's boarders now took on a more grim tone. "Oh, this is bad. Real bad."

The doors behind them opened as more Elites and Grunts poured into the room. Carter grabbed a frag grenade from one of the marines' belts, primed it, and threw it right into the middle of the group. When it blew, all the Grunts "flew away" to whatever version of the afterlife they believed in, and 2 Minors joined them as Emile and Six shot them each twice in the head. The Major leading the force looked seriously pissed at this point, and threw himself at Jun, who had pulled out his M7 SMG and was closing the distance between him and the Major. The Elite slammed into Jun and threw him to the ground. It pulled an energy dagger and thrust down, right into the place where Jun had been not $\frac{1}{2}$ a second ago. The III had rolled out of the way and now drew his knife and stabbed the Major through the mouth, right into its brain. Carter helped Jun up and the newly christened "Bravo Team" moved on through, toward yet another Pelican bay. Along the way, the alarms warned that "Hostiles have breached the port MAC bay."

When they arrived in the Pelican bay, there were 2 plasma turrets set up on an elevated walkway facing them, and 2 more facing the opposite

way. Jun grabbed a plasma grenade that he had taken from the now-dead pissed off Major, primed it, and threw it up at the Grunts who were operating the turrets. The grenade exploded, killing all 4 Grunts and rendering the turrets inoperable. The Elites and Grunts on the ground all took cover as a hail of bullets rained down on them. The Master Chief flanked them and sprayed them down with a hail of SMG rounds. 2 Grunts were killed and an Elite Minor rolled out of the way, only to be killed as a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round flew through his head. Another Elite went down as Six jumped on his back and snapped his neck. Emile ran up behind a Major and shot him through the gut with his shotgun. The Elite's shields buckled and he fell down dead. "That's the last of them."

A marine walked over to the window and remarked, afraid, "Uh, oh. Now they're leaving the Athens." About 5 seconds later, the Athens was no more. Lord Hood came over the comm. "Cortana, assessment." "That explosion came from inside the Athens, same as the Malta. The Covenant must have brought something with them. A bomb." "Then they sure as hell brought one here. Bravo Team, Find it."

A set of doors beneath them opened, which led to the armory where Carter and Chief had gotten their new armor. As the doors at the end of the corridor opened, a pair of Stealth Elites uncloaked and opened fire on the Spartans. Emile shot one with his shotgun, and the Chief killed the other with sustained bursts from his battle rifle. Six stooped and took a plasma rifle from one of the Elites' corpses. "This may come in handy."

They all heard the Master Gunnery Sergeant in the armory yell, "Get the hell out of my armory, split-lipped-motherfuck-OH GOD!" When the team managed to get the doors open, they found the Sergeant lying on the ground, dead, with a shotgun lying next to him and plasma burns on his gut. Emile ran towards the Elites, a Major and a Minor, stooped to pick up the other shotgun, and blasted the hell out of the Elites. Chief looked at Carter. "How they do that has always been a mystery to me." "Emile is one of the best with a shotgun." "I can tell."

They fought their way to a corridor where Johnson and the Commander whom they still did not know were pinned down by a group of Grunts and Elites. Johnson looked up at them. "Good to see you guys." The woman spoke up. "I was almost onboard when _they_ showed up." "Don't worry ma'am, we'll take care of them." Emile stole a grenade from Johnson, primed it and threw it right at one of the Minors. When it detonated, the Elite was torn to shreds and the surrounding Grunts went to whatever they called the afterlife.

After all of the hostiles had been eliminated, Cortana came over the comm channel. It was evident she was addressing Lord Hood. "Sir, hostiles have breached the fire control center. They have a bomb." "Can you diffuse it?" "Yes, but I'll need Bravo Team's help to make contact with the detonator." "Spartans, get to the fire control center and diffuse that bomb." When they reached the elevator, after fighting 3 Elite Rangers, Cortana contacted them. "Just so you know, there are quite a few Elites guarding the bomb, so you may need to get creative." Almost as soon as the doors opened, plasma fire rained down from a group of 3 Minor, 2 Majors, an Ultra, and 3 Grunt Majors on the Spartans, crippling their shields. The bomb was ticking away on the other side of the room. Emile grabbed another frag grenade that he had taken from Johnson, primed it, and threw it at the Ultra.

It rolled out of the way just as the grenade blew up, putting a minor dent in its shields, and killing 2 of the Grunts.

The elevator behind them opened again, and a lone ODST ran through, spraying MA5B rounds at the group of Covenant, killing the last Grunt and 1 of the Minors before reloading. He ran over to where Carter and Six had taken cover, pulled out an M6C Magnum, and took pot-shots at the Elites. Emile, still wielding 2 shotguns, ran forward and killed a Minor and a Major before having one of the shotguns slapped out of his grasp by the Ultra, who had become so pissed that it had pulled out its Energy Sword. It slashed down at Emile, who dodged out of the way, only to have his other shotgun cut in half. The ODST ran up behind it and sunk his combat knife into the back of its neck, killing it instantly. Emile picked up his other shotgun, the one the Master Gunnery Sergeant had used, and shot the last Major in the face, while the last Minor was killed by a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round passing through its head.

The Master Chief walked up to the ODST. "Who are you?" The ODST took off his helmet. "Gunnery Sergeant Edward Buck at your service." He turned to Six. "Good to see at least one other soldier survived the Fall of Reach. You helped my old unit in New Alexandria. Remember the Bullfrogs?" "The ones who used the jetpacks? I remember them. Though I don't remember you." The Chief looked over at the bomb. "I hate to break up the reunion, but we still have a bomb to diffuse." He walked over to the AI pedestal, conveniently placed right next to the bomb. Cortana's avatar appeared as the Chief walked over. "Me. Inside your head. Now." He placed his hand on the pedestal, then on the detonator of the bomb, allowing Cortana to disable the bomb. "How much time was left?" "You don't want to know."

Buck walked up to the Chief. "Sir, what are you going to do with that?" He pointed at the bomb. Chief opened up a comm channel to the Cairo's bridge. "Sir, permission to leave the station." Lord Hood responded curiously. "For what purpose, Master Chief?" "To give the Covenant back their bomb." There was a pause. "Permission granted." Chief turned to the former Noble Team. "Find a Pelican in one of the bays, get to In Amber Clad. Commander Keyes is already expecting you." Six looked at him, perplexed. "What about you, sir?" "I've got a little gift giving to do." He grabbed one of the spikes on the bomb as he said this, and started dragging the bomb towards one of the cargo elevators. Carter ran up, grabbed two of the spikes and helped him drag it. He looked at Buck. "Go with them." "Yes sir, Commander." And with that, the elevator doors closed and the Spartans, plus Buck walked over to the other elevator and took it to one of the Pelican bays.

When the group entered one of the Pelicans, They received a transmission from In Amber Clad. "Bravo Team, this is Commander Miranda Keyes of In Amber Clad. Once you board the ship, you need to get prepared for a surface battle." Six keyed the comm. "Yes ma'am. But we'll need to find the Chief and Carter once they finish up with whatever they're doing." I've already got a lock on their signals and I'm tracking them now." With that, the Pelican took off and headed for In Amber Clad's beacon.

Inside the Cairo, the Chief and Carter were waiting for the elevator to reach the airlock when Cortana, still inside the Chief's neural network, spoke up. "I know what you're thinking, and it's crazy." Carter looked at the Master Chief. "So stay here." Unfortunately for

all three of us, I like crazy." When the elevator arrived at the airlock, Chief and Carter hauled the bomb out into the open, and Carter ran over to where the airlock release lever was. When he grabbed it, Cortana asked what had been floating in Carter's mind for the past few minutes. "Just one question. What if you miss?" The Chief spoke up after a pause. "We won't." And with that, Carter pulled the lever and opened up the airlock. Everything that wasn't bolted down flew out as the atmosphere inside was vented, including the bomb, which was down now carrying a full ton of Spartan armor behind it causing it to tip up slightly.

Carter and the Chief guided the bomb down towards the nearest carrier, knowing that they would miss the one closest to Earth. The carrier shot a strange beam just as a UNSC ship passed over it, severing the UNSC ship nearly in half. Two Longsword fighters, evidently launched to help destroy the carrier, zoomed ahead of the Spartans and their payload, and launched a group of missiles at the center of the carrier, blowing a hole big enough to fit both the Spartans and the Covenant's "present". The hole led directly to the ship's core, where the Chief climbed up the bomb, armed it, and signaled Carter to join him in pushing the bomb closer to the center of the "room". When Carter stood up on the bomb, they both pushed off and soared through the Earth's orbit, towards the surface. The "present" detonated behind them, destroying the carrier instantly. _In Amber Clad_, with the rest of Bravo Team waiting, flew right into their path and they crashed onto the top.

Inside, on the bridge, Sgt. Johnson and the crew all heard the dual thumps as the Chief and Carter landed on top of the ship. Johnson looked at Commander Keyes, who was sitting nearby. "For a couple of bricks, they flew pretty good." The Commander keyed the comm. "Chief, Commander, get inside, gear up, we're taking this fight to the surface."

8. Chapter 8

Chapter 8- Just our luck.

****Authors Notes-** I lied accidentally about not starting the chapter until I finished my summer homework. Anyway, here is the sort-of novelization of Outskirts. As always, Rate and Review, but mostly Review. I need to know what you like and dislike about the book. "Your enjoyment of this book is the will of the Gods. And Iâ€¦ I am their instrument." I may be able to get chapters 9 and 10 up before school starts, but after that, expect slow updates. Sorry. Also, I need to know if you want the former Noble team to stay on Earth after the Prophet of Regret jumps to Delta Halo and help the ODSF squad from H3: ODSF, or go with John, kick Regret's ass, meet the Arbiter, and then either go with John to High Charity to kick the Prophet's asses, or go with the Arbiter, kick Tartarus' hairy ass, and stop the ring from firing. So many choicesâ€¦ so little time. Either way, there will be ass-kicking. I will not post Chapter 9 until I have made a decision on whether they stay on Earth or go to Installation 05. Thank you in advance for your time. One more thing, we have over 1000 views. Holy crap, I never expected it to get this popular in just about 2 weeks! Keep reading and tell your friends about this story.**

As the Pelican carrying Bravo Team neared its target, they all caught

the message coming from the Covenant Assault Carrier, their target. Cortana relayed the message back to In Amber Clad and the cockpit, where Sgt. Johnson was. "The message just repeats: Regret, Regret, Regret." Commander Keyes responded uninterestedly. "Catchy. Any idea what it means?" Johnson answered proudly, "Dear humanity, we regret being alien bastards. We regret coming to Earth. And we most definitely regret that the Corps just blew up our raggedy-ass fleet." The two pilots responded at once, "Hooh-rah." Cortana told Johnson that Regret was the Prophet's name and that he was calling for help.

One of their recon teams sent to scout the LZ reported in. "Immediate, Grid Kilo Two-Three is hot, recommend mission abort." One of the pilots keyed the comm. "Roger, recon." He turned to Johnson. "It's your call, Sarge." Johnson thought for a moment, and then responded, "We're going in." He turned to the ODST's (Buck had gone back to his squad in order to prep to board the carrier via orbital drop pods.) and ordered, "Get tactical, Marines!" Lord Hood contacted Bravo Team from the Cairo, which was still functional after the battle. "Bravo Team, get aboard that carrier, secure the Prophet of Regret. This is the only place on Earth the Covenant decided to land; That Prophet is going to tell us why."

The Pelican's intercom buzzed and one of the pilots came on, "30 seconds out, stand by toâ€¦| whoa." The Chief walked over to the comm terminal. "What is it?" One of the pilots screamed over the intercom, "SCARAB! BRACE FOR IMPACT!" Carter looked up from examining his DMR. "This feels familiar." Just then, the Pelican was hit by a barrage of plasma, presumably from the Scarab's AA gun, flipped over and crashed into the ground.

The door to the now destroyed Pelican flew open, and the Spartans, plus three of the ODST's crawled out. One of the ODST's, a Lieutenant, said out loud, "Shit, we lost Jameson in the crash." Johnson walked out. "Shake it off, Marines! Clear the crash site. Go, go, go!" Jun stood up and remarked, "Just our luck." Carter looked at Six, who had kneeled down to pick up his MA5B and the Plasma Rifle he had acquired from the Stealth Elite near the armory of the Cairo. "Now this really feels familiar." "Yeah, but we aren't on Reach, there isn't a Scarab that the Pelican is lodged in, and you aren't crippled from the crash." "Good point. But there is a Scarab to deal with." Emile looked over at the two. "Later. Let's go." They fell in with the marines, moving to a nearby alley where a lone Grunt was patrolling. When it saw the Spartans, it panicked and ran away. Six drew his knife and threw it, piercing the methane sack on its back and its spine, killing it instantly.

Six retrieved his knife, and the group moved silently into a nearby building, which curiously had ammo lying around and a machine gun turret set up already, but no bodies. As Six was pondering the reasons why this could happen, he collided with the back of an Elite Minor, who turned around, roared, slapped Six' Assault Rifle out of his hands, and then threw Six onto the ground and prepared to stab him with a plasma dagger. Six rolled just as the Elite thrust its dagger into the ground, drew his Plasma Rifle, and fired right at the Elite's head. Its Shields quickly went down and shortly thereafter, it joined all of its brothers who had died in the space battle. The Master Chief walked up, kicked Six's AR back to him, and then said, "Next time, watch where you're going."

One of the ODS'Ts helped him up, and the group moved on, inadvertently starting a firefight because the Chief had kicked a Grunt, sending it over the edge of the building and onto a Jackal that was walking by. A nearby Elite saw the "accident" and ran to the source, only to have its head explode as a 14.5X144mm AP-FS-DS round passed through its head. The Spartans turned to look at Jun, who they thought had fired the shot. He had a DMR and a Magnum, but no Sniper Rifle. "Wasn't me." The Chief looked around and then said over the comm, "Thanks, Sergeant." "No problem, Chief. Next time though, don't kick the Grunt. Just shoot it." Six looked over at the Chief. "Next time, watch where you're going."

Johnson yelled down, "We've got Jackals in the courtyard!" Six ran over to the machine gun and blasted 2 Jackals to the afterlife. The Chief jumped down and caved in an Elite Major's skull with one punch. Emile blasted a Jackal in the back with his shotgun. Carter stabbed another in the back of the neck, and Jun shot one through the mouth with his Magnum. The ODS'T Lieutenant stabbed an Elite Minor through the neck and proclaimed, "That was for Jameson." Six yelled down at the group, "Buggers coming over the rooftops!" He pointed to where a group of Drones were flying towards the group and then opened fire with the machine gun, killing 5 in the initial barrage, but overheating the gun in the process. "God damn, that hurts!" He shook his hands to dispel the heat, and then opened fire again, killing only 3. The Chief took down 2 with his M7 SMG, and Emile killed 1 with his shotgun. "That's the last of 'em." Cortana contacted the other Pelican that had gone down. "2nd squad, what is your status, over." "We're operational, ma'am, barely. Our pilot didn't make it." "Find a hole, stay put, we'll come to you." Another Pelican flew in overhead and hovered over the courtyard. "My girl's a little big for that courtyard, Sergeant. I see a good LZ a few clicks down. I'll meet you there, over." "Roger that." He yelled down to the ODS'T's, "Get a satchel on the gate."

Before anyone could get near the door, it fell over and a pair of Hunters stormed through. Johnson contacted the ODS'T's. "Hang back, let the Spartans show you how it's done." Six opened fire with the turret, wounding one, while Emile and the Chief ran behind it and shot it in its weak point, killing it. The ODS'T Lieutenant ran up to one, blazing a hail of bullets from his SMG. The Hunter ran forward and back-shielded the trooper, sending him hurtling into a nearby apartment, and killing him. Six obviously had a fondness for ODS'Ts, because in a fit of rage, he yanked the turret off the stand, jumped over the side of the building, and blasted the Hunter with the 200 rounds it kept in a box magazine, killing it within the first 100 rounds, but in his anger he kept firing. The Master Chief looked at Carter, amazed at Six's performance. "Does he do that often?" "Not that I know of, but he did seem to have a fondness for ODS'Ts after working with them in New Alexandria."

The group moved through the door and into another alleyway, this one containing 4 Jackals, 2 of them snipers, and 3 Elites. One of the ODS'Ts was hit in the shoulder with a Beam Rifle round and went down hard. The other ODS'T ran over, dragged the trooper to a safer area, peeled away the burned armor, and inspected the wound. "You're not going to be moving that arm for a while. It looks like the skin has melted to your shoulder. It's a miracle your armor didn't too" The injured trooper pulled out his sidearm and sniped the Jackal that had injured him. Six saw the troopers and ran over. "What's wrong?" "Beam Rifle round in the shoulder. Melted the skin to his bone." The

trooper pulled out his medkit and patched the injured trooper up as best he could. The Corpsman turned to Six. "You can't do anything here, Lieutenant. This trooper needs to go to a field hospital, wherever that is." "I can help take him there." "No. Go with your team and find 2nd squad. I'll handle this." Six ran off to join the other Spartans.

When Six caught up to the others, they were already close to where 2nd squad had set their beacon. A Pelican dropped down and hovered near where Sgt. Johnson was. He jumped on the back and looked at the Chief. "Chief, Commander needs me to help some soldiers who are dropping supplies. I'm not going to need this anymore." He handed his Sniper Rifle to the Master Chief, who in turn handed it to Jun after the Sergeant had left. The Spartans moved on, eventually coming to a building surrounded on its front by Covenant forces. The Spartans ran toward the entrance, where a lone marine sergeant was taking pot-shots with his DMR.

After all the hostiles had been killed, the Spartans walked over to the sergeant. "Spartans? I thought they had all died on Reach. Anyway, I'm Gunnery Sergeant Stacker. The LZ is on the other side of this building." They followed him into a dark corridor, where on the other side they saw the shadows of 3 Elites running towards the corridor. The Chief opened a team-wide frequency. "Get to cover and don't move. Do not engage until I give the signal." He received 4 green lights, which meant they had all gotten the message. Jun reported that there was a squad of Grunts behind the Elites, presumably in case any humans decided to ambush the Elites from behind. After the Grunts had passed by, the Chief gave the signal, and the Spartans sprang from their hiding places, killing the Grunts and a Minor undetected. Emile shot an Elite Major through the chest with his shotgun, causing the other Major to turn around and lunge at him, only to fall backwards onto the ground as a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round flew through its head. Emile looked back at Jun. "How many is that now, Jun?" "Four, but who's counting?" "You."

The team moved out of the corridor and found themselves in the middle of a firefight between a group of marines and a Phantom dropship, which had just dropped its compliment of troops: 6 Grunts and 2 Elite Minors, which all opened fire the second they hit the ground, killing 2 marines and injuring a third. The Spartans rushed forward, spraying fire on all hostiles in their way, killing all the Grunts and breaking the shields of one of the Minors. Emile ran behind the Minor and ran his kukri through its neck, while the Chief tackled the other and held it down while Carter shot it with his newly acquired DMR.

A pair of Warthogs drove up on the street beneath them and when they jumped down, the marines jumped out of the drivers seats. One of them looked at the Chief. "Compliments of Commander Keyes, sir." The Spartans piled into the Hogs, Emile driving one while Carter sat beside him and Jun operated the gun, and Six driving the other while one of the marines sat beside him and the Chief operated the gun. They drove off, heading for a highway that would supposedly take them to the carrier. Before they got to the highway, they encountered numerous Phantoms and Elite drop pods and had to fight them off before advancing.

As the group traversed the highway, part of the ceiling collapsed, and there was a beam that looked like a Scarab's. Carter looked over at Six and keyed the comm. "There's your Scarab." "_My_ Scarab? When

did it become mine?" The Chief cut in. "When you started bitching about it being yours. Besides, it hasn't noticed us, so you don't need to worry about it just yet." Emile cut in. "Can we all just agree that it's all of ours, and get the hell on the move? I'd like to be in the carrier when it leaves, not sitting here bitching about who has to deal with the Scarab." They drove to the end of the tunnel, and found a pair of marines, one of whom looked like he had just seen a ghost. The Chief walked over to the other, while the rest waited for him to return.

9. Chapter 9

Chapter 9- Time to kill us a really big bug

****Authors Notes-** I have decided! They willâ€¦ I'm not going to reveal it now. That would spoil the rest of this section of the book! You'll just have to read to find out where they go. As always, Rate and Review. Please. This is very important. "Your enjoyment of this book is the will of the Gods. And Iâ€¦ I am their instrument." Also, I am going to deviate a little to write a chapter on the Arbiter's final mission before the Brutes go bat-shit crazy and kill all the Elites. You know: the one where he goes to retrieve the key that activates the giant hula-hoops of death. For those of you born missing a sense of humor, I am referring to the Halo rings. Duh. I will write this chapter after the Chief kicks Regret's ass. Anyway, enjoy the sort-of novelization of Metropolis.**

The Master Chief walked over to where a marine was scoping up the Scarab that had just gone by. When he walked up, she told him that it "blew right through us. 50-cal, rockets, didn't do a thing." A Pelican flew over with a tank slung underneath it, and a very familiar sergeant in the passenger compartment.

Johnson jumped out as the tank dropped onto the ground, walked over to the marines and asked them where the rest of their platoon was. The female answered that it was wasted. The other marine was obviously panicking, because he responded with, "And we will be too, sir, if we don't get the hell out of here!" As he walked toward the Pelican, Johnson grabbed his shoulder. "You hit, marine? "No, sir." "Then listen up! The Spartans are going to take this tank, roll across that bridge, and blow up any inhuman son of a bitch dumb enough to get between them and the Prophet of Regret" He turned to the panicking marine. "Pull yourself together, because you are going with 'em." The other marine walked over. "What about that Scarab?" "We've all run the simulations. They're tough, but they're not invincible. Stay with the Spartans, they'll know what to do." "Yes sir, sergeant!" Cortana contacted Johnson. "Thanks for the tank. _They_ never get me anything." Johnson cocked the machine gun in the Pelican and lit a cigar. "Oh, I know what the ladies like."

The Pelican took off, and the Spartans piled into the tank, with the Master Chief driving, Emile operating the machine gun, and the rest piling onto the jumpseats. They did just what Johnson had said they would: they rolled across the bridge in the tank, and blew up any Covenant who got in their way. At the end of the bridge, Cortana voiced all their opinions. "That's quite a welcome party." Six's response was, "Tell me about it." Two Wraith tanks came out of the only open tunnel leading to where they needed to go. Carter pulled up the Rocket Launcher he had taken from the panicking marine, and

pumped both tubes into one tank, blowing it up. The other tank fired, narrowly missing the left side of the Scorpion. The Chief turned the barrel and blew the tank to hell and back with one well-placed shot.

As the group rode through the tunnel, they heard what seemed to be a group of marines fighting Jackals and Grunts and maybe a few Elites. There was a bang and all at once 3 Elites, 4 Grunts, and 2 Jackals went into the afterlife. Six turned to look at the Chief. "That was a little bit of overkill, don't you think?" "There's no such thing as overkill, only excessive force. And no, that was not excessive force." He shot a lone Grunt through the head with another tank round. "That was."

The group moved on in silence, or as close to silence as they could get with the roar of the tank's engine and the sounds of battle all around them. When they reached the other side of the tunnel, they abandoned the tank and went out on foot, through a service pipe, and into the middle of a skirmish between a Covenant squad, comprised of 2 Elites, 5 Jackal Snipers, 3 regular Jackals, and 10 Grunts, against Gunnery Sergeant Stacker in a Gauss Warthog. The Chief jumped down after killing one of the Snipers that was close by, and the Warthog stopped near him. "I could use you on the gun, Chief." Right as he jumped on, Carter jumped into the side seat and readied his Rocket Launcher. "Thought you guys could use some extra support." There were two Ghosts chasing the Gauss Hog, and with one shot from the Gauss Cannon, and one rocket, they were dealt with. The rest of the group found a regular Hog and followed the Chief and Carter.

They ended up back on the highway, after dealing with another Wraith and two more Ghosts, and were following another group of marines when three Phantoms dropped off three more Wraiths. Cortana informed the group that there was a group of marines trapped in the building on the far side of the street, right behind the Wraiths. Carter pumped his last rocket into one of the Wraiths, while the Chief put at least 5 Gauss rounds into it, blowing it sky-high. Six, who was riding in the other Warthog, jumped out and ran towards the nearest Wraith, jumped on the back, and jammed a plasma grenade into its weak spot. It exploded as he jumped off, putting a dent in his shields.

The other Wraith turned and fired at Six, who was still recovering from the explosion. Six locked his armor, over pressurized the gel layer of his suit, and braced for the impact. When the round hit, Six was sent flying, hitting a building about 2 stories off the ground and at least 50 feet from where he had been. After he fell out of the building, he stood up and groaned. "That really hurt." Emile drove up beside him, and when Six got in, Emile remarked, "Next time, get out of the way, or be more subtle."

After the group had destroyed the last Wraith, another Phantom dropped two Ghosts, one of which was destroyed almost instantly when a 25mm Gauss round smacked the side of it. The other was hit by the wreckage, causing it to go up in flames. The group drove up to where a group of marines were stationed, obviously defending the entrance to the building. As the Spartans disembarked their Warthogs, one of the marines walked up. "Sir, Corporal Perez, A company. CP's this way." He led the Spartans up a couple flights of stairs, briefing them as he went. "The Lieutenant got hit as soon as we dropped." The Chief cut in. "Who's in charge now?" "Sergeant Banks, sir, he up top. Come on, I'll show you." He led them to an overlook just above where

they had entered. A man, presumably Banks, turned and looked at them all, amazed. "When I called for backup, I didn't think they'd send Spartans." He turned around. "We've got trouble."

Just then, the Scarab rounded the corner, noticed a Scorpion tank that had just been dropped, and vaporized it with its main gun. One of the marines said, "See this look, it's terror!" Sgt. Banks keyed the comm. "This thing is really starting to PISS ME OFF! Marines, time to kill us a Scarab!" He led the Spartans to a series of bridges spanning a waterway, and soon enough, the Scarab turned the corner and moved towards them. Six grabbed a Rocket Launcher and a DMR, and jumped onto the Scarab. When he landed, three Elite Majors ran out of an area that appeared to access the control station. One of them fell over as a 14.5X114 AP-FS-DS round flew through its head. The others scattered as a hail of 7.62mm rounds flew at them, crippling their shields. Six looked up and saw Emile and the Chief, each wielding MA5B assault rifles, jump down after him. Carter jumped down next, wielding a DMR in one hand and an SMG in the other. Two more Majors and a Minor came out of the area and opened fire on the Spartans, dropping Six's shields and putting a dent in everyone else's. One of the Majors heads snapped back, and it fell as another 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round flew through its head, while the others were taken care of by a pair of well-placed plasma grenades.

The group entered the control area, where 2 Grunt Ultras, an Elite Ultra, and 2 Elite Majors resided. The Grunts both fell as a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round passed through one's head and exited into the others. The Ultra rushed them, but quickly fell back as its shields were depleted by the combined firepower of all 5 Spartans. The 2 Majors, who were operating the controls of the Scarab, left their posts, readied their Plasma Rifles, and charged the Spartans. Both quickly fell to the Spartans superior firepower. The Ultra, who was about to charge them again, witnessed his brother's deaths and was instantly pissed off enough to draw his Energy Sword, throw away all caution, and run at the Spartans. It managed to get close enough before its shields broke to swing at Carter, who was the closest, and would have cut the commander in two, had Six not tackled the Ultra and stabbed it with his knife. Six got up, sheathed his knife, and took the Energy Sword. Carter looked at him. "I could have dodged it." "No, you couldn't have. Not when you were still pouring SMG rounds into it." Emile walked over to the controls and initiated an overload of the reactors. "Let's get out of here."

The team walked to the end of the platform and saw a Pelican rise out of the smoke from the explosion. Johnson screamed over the comm. "That's right, you mothers, RUN!" Commander Keyes interrupted his victory celebration. "Not if we can help it, Sergeant. Extract the Spartans and return to In Amber Clad." "Yes ma'am." The doors to the passenger bay of the Pelican dropped open and the Spartans all piled in. The pilots took the Pelican into the hangar of In Amber Clad, and when they were inside, the frigate lurched forward. Carter keyed the comm. "Commander, mind telling us where we are going that we need to go that fast?" "We're chasing the Prophet. His carrier is going to jump to Slipspace inside the city." The frigate got into the carrier's shields (like the Chief did in H4 when he was chasing the Didact), and when it jumped, so did In Amber Clad. The shockwave produced by the jump destroyed the city and vaporized all the ODS drop pods sent to board the carrier, except Gunnery Sergeant Buck's squad, which had been diverted mere moments before to a new target set by their new CO.

10. Chapter 10

Chapter 10- Hard Landing

****Author's Notes-** Holy crap, I've already done 10 chapters! I never thought the book would get this long and successful! At last check, the book had about 1900 views. Thank you all so much for supporting this book. Without you guys, I don't think the book would have continued past the 5****th**** chapter. I would have lost interest because there would have been too few readers. I admit, I did not think the book would go even this far. Again thank you all for your support. As you may have read before, I decided to expand the story to the end of Halo 4 instead of just the end of 3. The story just has so much potential in H4. I just need more reviews. Also, I have started a forum for your ideas, but**** **I am going to need moderators, as I do not have an internet connection all the time. Who do you want to go with Arby and who do you want to go with the Chief? What minor characters do you want to see in the book? Do you want me to pull characters from the grave like Jorge** **and the ODS's from Halo: The Flood like Lieutenant McKay and Major Silva? Do you want me to bring back things from previous entries in the series like the UNSC **_**Spirit of Fire?***_** Post your ideas on the forum. This is your book; I'm merely writing it for you. "Your enjoyment of this book is the will of the Gods. And Iâ€¦ I am their instrument."** Enjoy the sort of novelization of Delta Halo. Also, do you think I'm being racist against Grunts? I would very much like to know.**

As the Prophet of Regret's carrier came out of Slipspace, so did a lot of debris, including another ship, the UNSC In Amber Clad. The ship was silent, and for all intents and purposes, permanently disabled. Inside, the Spartans of Bravo Team and their marine and ODS allies were recovering from such a quick jump, when the commander of the ship contacted Cortana with an interesting question. "Cortana, what exactly am I looking at?" Cortana used the ship's cameras to determine what Commander Keyes was talking about. "Thatâ€¦ is another Halo." Sgt. Johnson, who was also in on the transmission, was so astonished that he lost his cigar that he had lit moments before, and the Chief audibly gasped.

The rest of the Spartans looked at the Chief. Six walked over. "Chief, what's a Halo?" The Chief looked up at him, but Cortana answered first. "Halo is a ring-like structure built by a species long extinct, known to the Covenant as Forerunners. The rings are, when activated, designed to kill off the food source of a virulent parasite known as the Flood." "And that is?" "Sentient life. Humans, Covenant, whatever." "Ohâ€¦ that's not good." "But, the rings can only be activated using a key called the Activation Index." The Chief cut in. "Cortana, do you still have the one from the first Halo?" "Of course I do." She addressed Six again. "The rings can only be activated by what the Forerunners call 'Reclaimers', as far as I know, that term encompasses humans. The rings are attended to by constructs called Monitors. The one on the first Halo was called 343 Guilty Spark. The rings are known to house large samples of Flood, and on the first Halo, the Covenant accidentally released them. Guilty Spark convinced the Chief to get the Index and travel to the control room, where we had already visited before I knew it was a weapon to wipe out all life in the galaxy, and stopped them from activating the rings." Chief cut in again. "In my defense, I thought

the rings would destroy the Flood, not every other living thing. Spark never told me the true nature of the rings." "That doesn't matter now, Chief, we blew up the ring months ago." Cortana addressed Six again. "The Covenant believe that firing the rings will begin their Great Journey and make them all gods." "Okay, I think I got it. Thanks."

Commander Keyes came over the comm. "Cortana, I want all the data you've got on the first Halo: schematics, topography whatever, I don't care if I have the clearance or not." "Yes ma'am." "Spartans: take 1st Platoon, hard drop. Sergeant: load up 2 flights of Pelicans and follow them in." "Aye aye, ma'am." "Until I can move and fight, I'm going to keep a low profile, so once you leave the ship, you're on your own." The Spartans each heard two thumps on their pods, and responded with one thud of their own. "Understood." After about a minute of waiting, the pods dropped, sending the Spartans and their ODS'T allies down toward the ring. (Cue the song "I Believe I Can Fly.")

On the ground of the ring, a Jackal was admiring the clouds when it saw streaks of fire coming down out of the sky. It motioned to a nearby Grunt, who jumped onto a nearby plasma turret, but lost its footing, and slipped back down onto the ground. The second time it jumped up, it succeeded, and along with its companions opened fire on the streaks which they now identified as human drop pods. (End Song)

When the orbital drop pods hit the ground, the door was supposed to immediately fly off, allowing its occupant to quickly engage the enemy. This was not the case for Six, whose door was stuck. "Just my luck." He stiff-armed it and it still would not open. That's when he noticed the red buttons on the inside. He determined that these were for manually opening the door. After he had pushed all four, the door blew open. He quickly grabbed his MA5B Assault Rifle, slung his M392 DMR over his back for later, and ran to join the fight.

When Six found the other Spartans, all the enemies were already dead, save for a Major trying to sneak up on the Chief. Six ran up to it, jumped on its back and snapped its neck. Its dying screams alerted the other Spartans, who spun around, weapons at the ready. Six looked up at them after making sure the Major was dead. "You're welcome, Chief." "Thanks, but I could have handled it myself." "Not after it had stabbed you in the back and killed you."

The Pelicans came shortly afterwards, dropping 2 Warthogs and a company of ODS'Ts to keep the LZ secure. One of the ODS'Ts got in the gunners seat, while the Chief drove and Six sat in the side seat. As they rolled along, the ODS'T spoke up. "Wow. It looks just like the postcard: Dear Sarge; kicking ass in outer space. Wish you were here." Johnson came over the comm. "I heard that, jackass. Also I'm seeing a large building in the middle of this island." Cortana told him that she had seen it too. "If I were a megalomaniac, and I'm not, that is where I would be."

The group moved on until they came to a bridge that would have spanned the gap between where they were and where they needed to be, had the Covenant not retracted the bridge. Six noticed an entrance into the structure where the bridge had retracted and jumped out of the Warthog. He activated his stolen Energy Sword and ran in. The Chief went after him, only to find every Covenant being inside dead,

and Six taking his Sword out of the gut of a Major. The Major fell down, deader than a box of doornails. Chief went back out, and saw a dead ODS near the entrance. "Well, that explains that."

He jumped back into the Warthog, and Six joined him moments later, after lowering the bridge into position. That was when they all noticed the Wraith tank waiting on the other side. It shot a round at the Warthog that Emile, Carter and Jun were in, and the Warthog couldn't move because it was caught between a pair of rocks. The round impacted, destroying the 'Hog and throwing all three Spartans into the air. A Pelican came in and dropped a Scorpion tank next to the destroyed Warthog. Sgt. Johnson was in the passenger bay. "One heavily armored death machine, as ordered. Thank you for shopping Air Kick-Ass." He tossed down a can of some sort. "And here's your complimentary can of whoop-ass." Jun spoke up for the first time in a while. "When did we place an order there?" "When I saw that Wraith that just destroyed your Warthog," was the Chief's response. He hopped into the driver's seat, while Six manned the machine gun, and the rest hopped onto the sides. Carter pulled out his Rocket Launcher, loaded a fresh magazine, and used both tubes to destroy the Wraith.

The team moved on until they found an area of ruins thick with Covenant. The Chief shot one round into a group of 5 Grunts and 2 Elite Majors, killing all of them. Six opened fire at one of the plasma turrets around the perimeter. Emile loaded the "can of whoop-ass" into a Grenade Launcher he had found, and fired at one of the other turrets. The explosion was 5 times the size and strength of a normal grenade, completely obliterating the turret and the lowly Grunt operating it, plus 4 nearby Elites, one of them an Ultra. The Chief looked at Emile. "How did you know that was for the GL?" "I didn't. It just fit right, so I used it."

They moved on, eventually coming to a temple-like structure in the middle of the lake. Cortana spoke up. "Good, still no word of _In Amber Clad_ on the Covenant Battlenet. It's strange: The Covenant know we landed, yet they don't see us as much of a threat. Boy, are they in for a surprise." A Pelican flew overhead and dropped off 6 pods, each containing a different weapon. Emile notice in one there was a pair grenade with a note tied to one that said, "Dear Spartans, make that damn Prophet regret ever messing with humanity. From Johnson." "Hey guys, we got another present from Johnson." Six looked at him. "Tell me it isn't another one of his 'cans of whoop-ass'." "I think they are." "Perfect." "Do you want it?" "No, I just think it's a little overpowered." Johnson came over the comm. "I heard that, and I must say, Six, that thatâ€¦" He fake-cried a little. "â€¦That hurt my feelings. NOT! Get over it and put the damn thing to a good cause, soldier!" Emile keyed his comm. "Abso-frickin-lutely, Sergeant."

They all got as much ammo as they wanted to carry, including the "can of whoop-ass" for Emile, and moved into the structure, expecting to find the Prophet. What they found was a holo-image of him, and 4 Elite Honor Guards around it, 2 wielding Energy Swords, the other 2 dual-wielding Plasma Rifles. Six and the Chief drew their Swords, (Chief had found one a little while back), and lunged at the sword-wielding Guards, while the other Spartans exchanged fire with the other Guards.

Emile contemplated using one of the grenades, but since he only had

two, and it would probably kill everyone in the room, he decided against it. So he rushed one of the Guards with his shotgun, and blew it into whatever it called oblivion, while the other joined it as a pair of 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round flew through its head.

On the other side of the room, Six and the Chief were having a bit of trouble with the two Sword-wielding Honor Guards. Six had been thrown on the floor and was trying to stop the Elite from ending his life, and the Chief, having lost his sword, was trying to stab the Guard with his combat knife. Emile threw his kukri at the Guard that Six was fighting, stabbing it through the eye and into its brain, killing it instantly, while Carter, having snuck around the back of the other, jumped on its back and snapped its neck. Emile helped Six up and retrieved his kukri from the Elite's eye.

As the group moved out, Cortana stopped them. "Wait, go back." Chief put her chip down near the holo-image of the Prophet. "That's what I thought he said." She turned to the Spartans. "The Prophet of Regret is planning to activate Halo!"

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11- To Kill a Prophet

****Authors Notes-** Chapter 10 was one of the hardest so far to write, so I'm happy that's done. Now I just need to finish this part, and it's on to the Arbiter! FINALLY! I have waited so long to write for him. But, I digress. As always, Rate and Review, and check out the forum. It's there for your ideas for the book. I need moderators, so PM me if you're interested, because I don't have an internet connection all the time, and therefore can't moderate all on my own. I also need betareaders, so PM me if you're interested in that, just if you do betaread, DON'T SPOIL IT FOR EVERYONE ELSE! For now, though, enjoy the sort-of novelization of Regret.**

"The Prophet of Regret is planning to activate Halo!" The Spartans all looked at Cortana, astounded at what she had just said. The Chief asked her if she was sure, so she snapped her fingers, and, like magic, the holo-image had audio. The Prophet of Regret's image said, "I shall light the holy ring, release its cleansing flame, and burn a path into the divine beyond!" Cortana snapped her fingers again, and the image stopped. "Pretty much." The Chief keyed his comm. "Commander, we have a problem." "So I hear, but from what I understand, the Prophet will need an object, the Index, to activate the ring. I've located a Library similar to the one you found on the first Halo. If the rings work the same way the index should be inside." Johnson joined the conversation. "I'll bet the Covenant are thinking the exact same thing." "Then we better beat them to it, Sergeant. Extract your men and meet me at the Library." "Yes ma'am." "We'll secure the Index, Spartans; you take care of the Prophet. He's given us all the intel we need."

The Chief picked up Cortana's data chip and put it back in his helmet, and the group moved out. Before they got out of the room, a group of Drones flew in. When the bugs were all swatted, the team moved out again, moving toward the center of the lake, where they believed Regret to be. Before they could get on a gondola to take them to the structure where Regret was, a Phantom dropped off a pair of Hunters. Six looked at Emile. "Now would be a very good time to

use one of those 'Cans of whoop-ass'." The Hunters put a stop to that, barreling their way along and making it impossible to get a good shot without killing at least one of the Spartans. "I can't without killing at least one of us." "Perfect. Just hellishly perfect." Six grabbed a plasma grenade, primed it, and threw it at the back of one of the Hunters. It stuck right in an area of exposed flesh. It detonated, majorly injuring the Hunter it had stuck and pissing off both.

As they ran at Six, a grenade went off beside the Hunters, killing both. Six turned to the source, and saw Emile holding a smoking Grenade Launcher. "Thanks for the clear shot." "No problem. Next time, though, tell me when you're going to use one of those things." When the grenade had blown up, Six's shields had been completely drained due to his proximity to it. The Spartans got on the gondola, but before they could activate it, a Pelican flew in overhead and dropped off 6 pods, each filled with weapons, including a prototype Sticky Detonator(not like the one in H4, but similar. It does not have the monitor on the side to see what is around the explosive.) The Chief took that, while the others restocked on ammo for their weapons, or at least the ones that were dropped, as Emile could find no grenades for his Launcher, overpowered or not.

They reentered the gondola and activated it. They got no more than 50 yards before a group of Drones beset them. The Chief pulled out his SMG and rained bullets onto them, dropping 5, but leaving at least 10 unharmed. "Fuck this." The Chief dropped his SMG, and pulled up a Rocket Launcher from one of the three pods that had landed on the gondola, and fired both tubes, killing all the rest of the Drones. Six looked at the Chief. "Nice shots." The Chief ignored him and focused on seeing if there were any more threats up ahead. He saw another gondola approaching, carrying 4 Elite Rangers. The gondolas stopped next to each other, and the Elites all jumped into the air, using EVA packs to stay aloft.

After killing all of them, including one being shot through the head with a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round, Six inspected one that had fallen onto the gondola. Emile walked up beside him. "What are you doing?" "Trying to find a way to detach this thruster pack, it may come in handy." "Okay, but when it blows up, don't come crying to me." "I won't. I'll just find another pack." He found a way to detach it, and slung it over his back. It didn't fit comfortably, due to it being made for Elites, but it fit tightly. "Stand back, everyone. I'm going to test this." His armor initiated an uplink to the pack, and he keyed the activation light. The pack activated and threw Six forward and into the ground. "Okay. Did not see that coming." Cortana spoke up. "Chief, hand me to him. I may be able to help." The Chief took her data chip out of his helmet and gave it to Six, who put it in his helmet. Cortana examined the schematics of the pack. "I see. Six, you need to turn the thrust level down if you want to use this like a jet pack. Otherwise, you can use this to get a quick burst of speed. Handy for getting away from Johnson's grenades. And Elites with swords. The only downside is that neither last forever. The Elites must have something to help them stay aloft indefinitely" "How can I control which direction I want the thrusters to push me?" "Simple, just lean that way." "Okay. Thanks." (Yes, Six just invented the thruster pack from H4.) He removed Cortana's data chip and gave it back to the Chief.

The gondola came to a stop at a tower on one of the sides of the

lake. The group moved in, aware that this was not their final objective, but figuring that this would take them to it. They entered a room that had a hole in the middle, and a shitload of Jackals and Drones and Grunts (Oh, my!). The Drones took to the sky, or at least what constituted the "sky" in an enclosed space, and rained down plasma on the Spartans. Carter "pulled a Chief" and used both rockets from his launcher to kill all of them, while Six used his new thruster pack to close the distance between him and a Jackal. He slammed his fist into the Jackal's face, caving it in with his strength plus the added force of his thruster pack. He threw one of his plasma grenades, sticking it to the knee of one of the other Jackals. It freaked out, running towards its companions in a way that said: "Get this fucking thing the hell off me!" The grenade detonated, killing 4 of the 5 remaining Jackals. The last one suffered the same fate as so many Elites, taking a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round through the head. Six turned to Jun. "I thought you only used that thing on Elites?" "I couldn't resist that great of a shot."

An elevator came up out of the hole in the middle of the room moments later. Cortana observed that the elevator would likely take them to another tower that would connect to their objective. "unless you guys would rather swim." Emile took a step back. "I'm not getting in that thing." Six turned to him. "Why? Scared." "No. Claustrophobia." "Come on, you rode in that drop pod just fine." The Chief turned to them. "Actually, he was freaking out the whole ride down. You just didn't hear it." Six turned back to Emile. "Would you rather just suck it up and get in, or let that son of a bitch Prophet activate the ring and kill us all. Worse, you'd be letting Johnson down by not putting those damned grenades to a good cause." "Okay, I'll get in. But only because I don't want to let Johnson down. And because I want to kill a Prophet."

They all got in the elevator, or whatever it was, and the Chief activated it. It dropped slowly, and then stopped for a moment before plunging into the lake. Cortana informed the group that she had intercepted a secure transmission from Regret's carrier to something called "High Charity". "It seems to be a formal apology to the Prophets of Truth and Mercy. Apparently, Regret jumped the gun when he attacked Earth. He's asking the other Prophets to 'forgive his premature arrival.' Claiming that 'no human presence was foretold'. That explains why there were so few ships in his fleet, but it's odd that a Prophet would have such bad intel on his enemy's homeworld."

The elevator started to ascend, and when it reached the top, Emile breathed a sigh of relief. The door stayed closed for a while. Six looked at the door. "Wasn't it supposed to open when we reached the top?" The Chief looked over at him. "Guess it must be stuck." Emile looked at the door, then at the Chief. "Oh no. I am not being in here one moment longer than I need to be. Clear a path. I'm going to break down the door." The others moved to the sides, and Emile kicked the door, but it didn't budge. He looked at Six. "Use your thruster pack to help bash the door open." "Why not just break the glass and go through there?" "That works." Emile kicked out the glass windows, and the team exited the elevator, now inoperable. They moved through, coming to a room with 5 Grunts in it. Carter and Six pulled out their DMRs and killed 4 with headshots. Six looked at the dead Grunts. "They should really make it so that the Grunts eject confetti and say 'Yay!' when they are shot in the head." Carter looked at him. "Why?"

"I don't know, so that we know the difference between a headshot and a neck shot." They moved on, finding the last Grunt hiding behind the other staircase. Six threw his knife at it, sticking it in the Grunt's eye.

He retrieved his knife, and the group moved into another room, this one much larger. It hosted a pair of Hunters, a pair of sword-wielding Elite Honor Guards, 4 Jackal Snipers, and a few Drones. The Chief took out the prototype Sticky Detonator and fired it at the Hunters, killing one that it stuck and injuring and pissing off the other. Six stabbed one of the Honor Guards in the back and stole its Energy Sword, then charged at the other, wielding both Swords. Jun shot one of the Snipers through the eye, and another through its long, pointy nose. Emile stole Carter's Rocket Launcher and "pulled a Chief", using both rockets to kill the Drones, and Carter, taking his Rocket Launcher back, reloaded and shot the other Hunter, killing it and sending it flying about 5 feet back. Six, now dueling the other Honor Guard, lost one of his Swords, then used his thruster pack to punch the Guard in the face, which sent it reeling and allowed Six to stab it in the neck and kill it. He picked up his other Sword and joined the others as Emile tortured the last Jackal. "Emile, just kill it already." Emile stabbed his kukri into the Jackal's neck, then pulled it out and moved on with the group.

They came to another area like the one they entered just after they left the elevator-like thingy. This time though, there were no enemies, at least that they could see. A shot rang out and a Stealth Elite dropped and its camo module failed as a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round flew through its head. Mysteriously, the Elite was missing part of its head. Carter turned to Jun. "How did you know that it was there?" "I saw a twitch of the light and blew its fucking head off." "Oh." Six drew his knife and threw it. It stuck right in the mouth of another Elite that then dropped dead. Carter pulled out his DMR and shot another Elite in the throat, which was one of the unshielded places on it. Emile ran up and shot a pair of Grunts in the head with his shotgun, while the Chief pulled out his Battle Rifle and shot three Grunts in the head. With one burst. Another Elite ran out of a door at the other end of the room, this one wielding an Energy Sword. Six activated one of his and threw it at the Elite. It stuck in the Elite's stomach. Six ran up and stabbed the Elite in the face with his other sword, then retrieved the Sword from its gut. "Damn, both are low on charge." He dropped both swords and picked up the Sword from the fallen Elite. Six's HUD showed that it had a 100% charge, enough for 10 kills. "Now then, that's better."

Six grabbed his knife from the first Elite he had killed, and the group moved on into a room— containing another elevator-like thingy. Emile, surprisingly, was the first to get in. Six went in next. "Finally got over your claustrophobia?" "No. I'm just imagining being in a big, open area." "Oh, okay. Good luck with that." The rest entered, and the Chief started the "elevator." As the group traversed the lake bottom, Cortana informed them that Regret's Carrier had received a response from High Charity. "A very well-encrypted message from the Prophet of Truth. Listen to this 'Your haste has jeopardized the fulfillment of our Covenant, threatened our grand design. That you shall be spared a public display of our contempt is thanks only to Mercy's wise counsel.' Truth, Mercy, Regret, three Prophet hierarchs. Killing Regret might shake up the Covenant leadership a bit, but frankly, it sounds like you may be doing Truth a favor."

The "elevator" reached the top, and this time, the door worked. Emile stepped out, and saw an Elite Honor Guard walking away from where they were. He walked up behind it and slit its throat with his kukri, then shot another with his shotgun. When he reloaded, he remarked, "Damn, only 12 shells left. Better find more soon. How's everyone else doing on ammo?" The Chief replied that he had one spare magazine for each of his SMG's, and 2 spare mags for his Battle Rifle. Carter had 1 spare mag for his DMR, and no more spare rockets. Jun had 1 spare clip for his Sniper Rifle and 2 spare mags for his SMG. Six had 2 spare clips for his DMR and a 60% charge on his plasma rifle, plus his fully charged Energy Sword. "I don't know what happened to my assault rifle, but I have 4 spare clips for that, too." Carter looked at him. "Those can be used in your DMR when you turn it to automatic fire, so save them." "Oh, never knew that." "You do now, Six. Let's get moving." Six thumbed the mag release on his DMR, slotted an assault rifle mag, thumbed the fire selector switch to "automatic", and joined the group.

They moved on, finally coming to the surface, which was beset by Jackals and Drones and Elites (Oh, my!). Jun shot one of the Elites, a Major, through the head with a 14.5X114mm AP-FS-DS round. Six blasted a group of Drones with his AR/DMR, killing about 15 before needing to reload. Emile blasted a Jackal with his shotgun, while the Chief pelted an Elite with his SMGs. Carter sniped 3 Drones with his DMR, leaving 2 alive, which the Chief shot with his SMGs. "Damn, last mags." Jun looked over at the Chief. "You can have my spares. It not like I'm going to use them." He handed the spare SMG mags to the Chief. "Thanks, Jun."

They made their way to the gondola that would take them to the structure where Regret was, and when they arrived, a Pelican pilot came over the comm. "This is going to be my last run. I'm almost out of fuel. Oh, by the way," he opened the hatch and dropped a box down to Emile. "the Sergeant wants you to have that." Emile opened the box, and found another one of Johnson's 'cans of whoop ass', this one with another note in it. "Spartans, this grenade is packed to the brim. I don't know how big of an explosion it will make, but I know it will be pretty fucking big. Make that son of a bitch Prophet regret ever declaring war with us. Johnson"

Emile looked at the others. "Johnson sent us a really big can of whoop ass." Cortana asked to examine the grenade, so Emile handed the grenade to the Chief. "This grenade will explode as soon as it is fired. The explosion will be about 10X the size and strength of one of his regular grenades." Emile looked at the group. "Does anyone have any duct tape and some rope?" Six pulled out a roll of duct tape and a bundle of string. "Sure do. Why?" "I'm going to use this thing to clear that platform." "You're nuts." "Probably, but at least none of us have to use it in our hands." "Good point. Just make sure you use the one he already gave you first." "Of course I will." He loaded the last of Johnson's regular grenades into his GL, and then grabbed as many shells for his shotgun as he thought he needed. This equaled about 60 shells.

The rest of the group loaded up on ammo and then moved to the gondola-type thingy. The Chief started it, and Emile moved to the front, waiting for the right time to use his last regular can of whoop ass. When the structure's Covenant defenders came into range, he fired, killing all of them and obliterating the turrets defending

it. Emile loaded the big can of whoop ass, then ran to the entrance and taped it down and tied the string to the trigger. Just then, the group heard pops coming from above, and saw Covenant Super-Carriers, too many to count, coming out of Slipspace. They were followed by a gigantic city-like ship, which the group assumed to be High Charity. Cortana spoke up. "That's the largest Covenant fleet I've ever seen, the largest _anyone's_ ever seen. Let's kill Regret before it can stop us."

Just then, a large group of Covenant easily comprised of 50 Grunts, 10 Jackals, and 5 Elites, came out of the Entrance to the structure. The Spartans all retired to a safe distance, and Emile pulled the string. "This is going to be one hell of a bang!" The grenade blew up, killing all of the hostiles, and blowing a hole in the structure that led directly to the center room, where the Spartans found the Prophet of Regret, surrounded by 5 Elite Honor Guards, all of which were still recovering from the blast. Six ran up and stabbed all 5 with his Energy Sword before they could recover, and was promptly blasted by a pulse laser from Regret's gravi-chair thingy, sending the III down to the floor. "Wow that hurt." The Chief pulled out his Sticky Detonator, reloaded it, and fired at Regret. The explosive stuck to the hierarch's chair, and when it went off, it killed the Prophet and destroyed his chair. Cortana warned the group that the carriers had launched a wave of Phantoms, too many for even her to count. Six said, "That's bad. Really bad. Let's get out of here. NOW!"

The group ran for the hole Emile had blown in the structure, and when they got out, they looked up and saw a carrier, quite low in orbit, start to charge its cleansing beam. Carter yelled, "Drop your weapons and ammo; they'll only slow you down!" The Spartans dropped everything, except Six, who kept his Sword and thruster pack. The Spartans took off just as the carrier began glassing the area in an attempt to kill them. They ran until the pathway dropped into the lake. The group jumped off the platform, into the waters below. The impact knocked all of them, except Six, who had used his thruster pack to slow his descent, out cold. Tentacles came out of the water and grabbed them all, pulling them down, and Six heard a deep voice say: "This is not your grave. But you are welcome in it."

12. Chapter 12

Chapter 12: The Arbiter

****Author Notes-** Finally, I get to write for Thel! (That's the Arbiter.) You guys are all favoriting and following, but not reviewing. Are you scared, or what? I need reviews, not more followers. At last check, 8-19-13, I had 9 reviews. NINE reviews. And none since at least chapter 8. WTF? I REQUIRE FEEDBACK! I was going to bring back the ****_**Spirit of Fire**_****, but since you guys can't be bothered to say anything, I guess I won't now. I sounded like a total asshole right there, and I apologize, it's just that you guys follow and favorite, but don't leave feedback for me. I may still bring back ****_**Spirit of Fire**_****, but it's on the fence. I'm going back to school soon, 8-28-13, and I may also discontinue the story when I do until Thanksgiving Break. I need to know whether you guys want me to continue with it or not. Also, I tried to get on the forum and had trouble. To get on, you need to go to my profile. I don't know why. Sorry. For now, enjoy the sort-of novelization of Sacred

Icon.**

__**Covenant Holy City, High Charity. Sanctum of the Hierarchs**__

As Thel' Vadamee, now known only as 'The Arbiter', walked towards the hierarchs chambers, he noticed Elite Honor Guards being stripped of their armor by Brutes, most likely due to the Prophet of Regret's death. When he walked in, he saw an Ultra, R'tas' Vadumee, in a heated discussion with the Prophet of Truth.

"This is unprecedented, unacceptable." "A hierarch is dead, Commander." "His murderers were within our grasp! If you had not withdrawn our Phantomsâ€¦" "Are you questioning my decision?" "No, Holy One. I only wish to express my concern that the Jirhalnaheâ€¦" "Changing the Guard was a radical step, but recent events have made it abundantly clear that the Sangheli can no longer guarantee our safety." "I shall relay your decision to the council." R'tas walked away, and the two other Sangheli Minors with him followed.

The Prophet of Truth noticed the Arbiter, and seemed relieved. "Politics, how tiresome." Do you know, Arbiter, the Sangheli have threatened to resign? To quit the High Council because of thisâ€¦ exchange of hats?" The Arbiter walked forward until he was in front of the Prophet of Truth. "We have always been your protectors." "These are trying times, for all of us." The hierarch next to Truth, the Prophet of Mercy, now spoke. "Even as the human's annihilation filled us with satisfaction, the loss of one of the Sacred Rings wracked our hearts with grief." Truth now addressed the Arbiter again. "Putting aside our sorrow, we renewed our faith in the prophecy that other rings would be found." Truth turned around, looking out of the window to the space outside. "And look at how our faith has rewarded us." The Arbiter walked to the window and saw another of the Sacred Rings. The Prophet of Mercy addressed the group. "Haloâ€¦ its divine wind will rush through the stars, propelling all who are worthy along the path to salvation!" Truth turned to the Arbiter once again. "But how to start this process? For ages we searched for some way to unlock the secrets of the rings- an Oracle. And with your help, we have found it."

The three went to the center of the room, where they found the Oracle, disabled and floating. Mercy addressed the Arbiter. "With appropriate humility, we plied the Oracle with questions, and it, with clarity and grace, has shown us the key." Mercy pushed a button on his chair, and an object, known as a Sacred Icon appeared next to the Oracle. Truth addressed the Arbiter. "You will journey to the surface of the ring and retrieve this Sacred Icon. And with it we shall fulfill our promiseâ€¦" Mercy spoke again. "Salvation for all!" "And begin the Great Journey."

The Arbiter left the Sanctum and went to a Phantom that had been prepared for this journey. When he embarked, he noticed that there were no Sangheli onboard, only Jirhalnahe. The Phantom left High Charity and proceeded to the ring. Tartarus, the High Chieftain of the Jirhalnahe, told him that once the shield around the Library was down, they would go straight to it, so as to not keep the hierarchs waiting. Thel was curious as to something. "The human that killed the Prophet of Regret, who was it?" "Who do you think?" "The Demon is here?" Tartarus laughed a bit at this. "There is not just one Demon, but five. Why do you ask? Looking for a little payback?" "Retrieving the Icon is my only concern." "Ha, ha, ha, Of course." The Phantom

neared where Thel was to be dropped off at, and Thel disembarked.

Almost as soon as Thel left the Phantom, a Forerunner construct rose up behind him. He turned, and brandishing his Carbine, fired three shots at it, all of which proved ineffective. The construct was hit on its side by a hail of plasma, and it flew away, followed closely by the Phantom. The Arbiter was contacted by the Jirhalnahe pilot. "Lower the shield, Arbiter! I'll pick you up when you've finished.

The Arbiter moved into the security station, at least that's what he thought it was, activated a piston that would take him further down into the facility, and was beset by a group of Forerunner Sentinels. He had dealt with these before on the planet Threshold, where he was dispatched to kill a Heretic Leader. He shot each with an overcharged Plasma Pistol discharge, and then moved further into the facility. He constantly noticed smaller versions of Sentinels, or at least what he thought to be smaller versions. These did not impede him, and all in all seemed to ignore him.

He dropped through another piston, and heard what sounded like Needler and Plasma Pistol shots. He moved toward the sounds, and found an Unggoy (Grunt) and a Kig-Yar (Jackal) fighting three Sentinels. The Arbiter shot two of the three with overcharged Plasma Pistol shots, and dispatched the third with a Carbine shot to the eye, or at least, that glowing part in its center. The Unggoy noticed Thel's actions and said, "Arbiter, our savior!" The Kig-Yar said nothing. The Unggoy turned to it. "Stupid Kig-Yar, say thank you!" The Kig-Yar remained silent. The group moved along, finding a long catwalk-like structure. As they navigated it, Tartarus contacted Thel. "You're getting close to one of the shield generators. Many of my Jirhalnahe have fallen trying to get to it. Let's see if you fare any better."

The three moved on, dispatching a few Sentinels that got in their way, and came to another piston. Thel activated it, and they all dropped through. When they landed, another Unggoy (Grunt) came up to the Arbiter. "Big, scary things! Please, don't make me go back!" Thel continued on and, in spite of its protests, the Unggoy followed him. Thel noticed that the Sentinels deployed from small, door-like structures on the sides, and that just before a Sentinel was deployed, the structure made a distinct sound. Thel threw plasma grenades at the openings, and disabled them as he went, minimizing his engagements with the Sentinels.

Thel dropped through another piston, and found himself in a large room, guarded by one of the constructs he had encountered when he first landed. The others did not follow him this time. Tartarus told him that he was near the power source for the generator. "Find a way to disable the locks holding it in place." He activated his Active Camouflage, something that all Sangheli Combat Harnesses had, and snuck into the room. The camo was not perfect, however. Even though he could move as fast as he wanted and remain perfectly invisible, it only lasted a short time, and unlike the newer Harnesses, combat disrupted his field. He snuck around the back of the construct, what Tartarus had called an "Enforcer", and threw two plasma grenades at its back. When the grenades blew, the Enforcer was separated into three, very inoperable parts. He moved around the room, deactivating the locks around the power source. When he had disabled all four, the

center rose up, and he saw a monitor appear on the top. He deactivated the containment shield around the Library. Then waited for something to happen.

The platform that he and the power source dropped down then started to move ahead. What Thel had thought was a wall turned out to a large set of doors. The Phantom flew ahead of him, and he received a transmission from Tartarus. "Our path to the Library is clear. We'll pick you up on the ledge ahead." The platform continued to move forward towards Thel's extraction point. Just as Thel embarked the Phantom, the wall ahead opened and another Enforcer came at them. Tartarus yelled at the pilot to get them out of there, and the Phantom took off towards the Library.

The Phantom dropped him in near a Covenant camp on the other side of the wall. When he arrived, he saw his allies, Sangheli this time, engaged in battle with the Flood, including one very familiar Commander. "Arbiter, what are you doing here?" They all heard screams, the telltale sign of a Flood attack. "We must hold this camp if we are to survive." The Flood came soon after, and was repelled almost as quickly, due to a Phantom flying in overhead. One of the other Sangheli remarked, "Cursed Parasite, it does not give up easily!" R'tas yelled at him, "Indeed, brother!" When this final wave had been dealt with, R'tas disembarked the turret he had been using and walked up to the Arbiter.

13. Chapter 13

Chapter 13- The Arbiter, Part 2

****Author's Notes-** We're halfway done with the Arbiter's final mission, which is ironic that it occurs on such an unlucky chapter. Anywho, as always Rate, Review, and post on the forum. That's what I started it for. I'll probably finish up the H2 section before school starts, but after that, expect updates only about once a week. Sorry. Enjoy the sort of novelization of Quarantine Zone.**

The Arbiter walked toward R'tas Vadumee, the Commander of the Sangheli forces here. "In the center of this zone is a Sacred Icon critical to the Great Journey. I must find it." "Then we shall cut into the heart of this Infestation," Het turned and addressed all the Sangheli around him. "Retrieve the Icon, and burn any Flood that stand in our way!" The Sangheli roared in agreement. R'tas turned to Thel. "The Parasite is not to be trifled with. I hope you know what you are doing."

R'tas addressed the Sangheli as Thel moved out. "Go, warriors! And fear not pain or death! Go Arbiter, I'll follow when our reinforcements arrive." Thel jumped into a Spectre that was nearby, and raced away. He entered a giant space that hosted 4 Enforcers, Sentinels, and a cluster-fuck of Flood. The Arbiter blazed through these, intent on recovering the Icon.

Thel journeyed on, moving closer to the Icon. He came across numerous Enforcers and Sentinels, as well as ungodly amounts of Flood, but kept moving on. He reached an area where the Flood were, ironically, on the defensive, he punched through the center of these forces, and made his way to a gondola-like structure that would take him to the Library. He noticed that R'tas was not far behind him. They heard

more screams, and R'tas activated his Sword. "Go, Arbiter. I'll keep the Parasite at bay!" He ran off toward the screams, and Thel activated the gondola. He noticed another on the far side. "Humans! They must be after the Icon as well!" Tartarus' Phantom flew in beside the gondola. "I see that coward didn't join you. I'll try to keep the Flood off your back."

Another Phantom dropped more Sangheli. One of them ventured to the front of the platform. "The Parasite gathers for another assault! Hold your ground!" They fought off the Flood until the gondola reached the other side. "Go, Arbiter! Retrieve the Sacred Icon before the Humans do!" Thel raced off toward the center of the Library, where he knew the Icon to be. He ignored all Flood Forms as he raced on.

When he reached the center, he immediately took cover because there were two humans in there with him. One of them grabbed a vine of some sort, and lowered itself toward the Icon. It grabbed it, and Thel winced. The vine gave way, and the other human caught it. "You know, your father never asked me for help either." "The Index is secure. The two humans moved away from the hole, and one activated his radio. "Mickey, Perez, how's our exit? Mickey, Perez, come in." It turned to its companion. "We've got trouble." The one with the Index brandished two of what they called "SMGs", while the other held a "Battle Rifle". Thel cloaked and moved intent on capturing the Icon without being seen.

He vaulted over the pipe he had been using for cover and moved closer. The one with the Battle Rifle saw him, yelled, "Damnit!" and opened fire on Thel. The shots deactivated his camo, but he was already close enough to slap the Rifle out of its hands. It looked at him. "How you doing?" Thel head-butted it, and it went down. The other saw Thel and opened fire. "Johnson, you okay? Johnson?" Thel closed the distance between it and him, and slapped the SMGs out of its hands.

A gravity field appeared around the human, and it was pulled aside. Thel turned and found Tartarus had taken the Icon from the human. "Well done, Arbiter. The hierarchs will be pleased. "The Icon is my responsibility." _Was_ your responsibility. Now it's mine. You and the rest of you disgusting race shall die. And I, Tartarus, Chieftain of the Brutes, shall be the one to kill you, Arbiter!" "When the hierarchs learn of this, they will take your head!" "'When they learn', fool, they ordered it." And with that, Tartarus slapped the Arbiter with his hammer, and Thel fell into the hole that the Icon had hovered above.

14. Chapter 14

Chapter 14- High Charity, Part 1

****Authors Notes-** We're almost done with the H2 section of the book! As always, Rate, REVIEW! DO IT NOW, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT! And post on the forum, PLEASE! I REQUIRE FEEDBACK! (It's official, I have become like a smart AI after 8 years of service. If you don't know what that equates to, play Halo 4, [clears throat, assumes Jackie Chan accent] you will understand, my young grasshoppers.) For now, enjoy the sort of novelization of "Gravemind" | Dun-dun-Duuuuuuuuuuuuuuun! **

Far below the surface of the Halo ring, 5 Spartans and an Elite stirred to find themselves in an audience with a creature far beyond their wildest nightmares. One of the Spartans, the Master Chief was more open than the rest. "Whatâ€¦ is that?" The creature responded. "I? I am a monument to all your sins." Six looked at it in recognition. "You're the thing that dragged us down here!" The creature ignored Six and pulled the Elite and the Chief towards it. The Elite was struggling fiercely. The Chief looked at it. "Relax; I'd rather not piss this thing off." "Demon!"

The creature lifted the Spartans towards it. "These ones are machine and nerve; and have their minds concludedâ€¦" It lifted the Elite. "This one is but flesh and faith; and is the more deluded." The Elite glared at the creature. "Kill me or release me, Parasite, but do not waste my time with talk!" "There is much talk, and I have listened, through rock and metal and time. Now I shall talk, and you shall listen." It lifted up two figure, one that looked like the Monitor from the first ring, and one that looked like the Prophet the Spartans had killed.

The Monitor spoke first. "Greetings, I am 2401 Penitent Tangent. I am the Monitor of Installation 05." The Prophet spoke next, though it sounded like it was in a great deal of pain. "And Iâ€¦ I am the Prophet of Regret, councilor most highâ€¦ hierarch of the Covenant." 2401 Penitent Tangent addressed the Spartans. "Reclaimers? Here? At last. We have much to do. This facility must be activated if we are to control this outbreak." Regret addressed the Monitor. "Stay where you areâ€¦ Nothing can be done until my sermon is complete!" "Not true. This installation has a successful utilization record of 1.2 trillion simulated and 1 actual; it is ready to fire on demand."

Regret addressed the Elite. "Of all the objects our Lords left behind, none are so useless as these Oracles! They know nothing of the Great Journey!" The Monitor rebuked Regret. "And you know nothing of containment. You have demonstrated a complete disregard for even the most basic protocols!" The creature spoke again. "This one's containmentâ€¦" It gestured to the Monitor. "And this one's Great Journey are the same." It addressed the Elite. "Your Prophets have promised you freedom from a doomed existence, but you shall find no salvation on this ring. Those who built this place knew what they wrought. Do not mistake their intent, or all shall perish, as they did before." The Chief looked at the Elite. "This thing is right, Halo is a weapon. You're Prophets are making a big mistake." "You're ignorance has already destroyed one of the Sacred Rings, Demon. It shall not harm another!"

The creature spoke again. "If you will not hear the truth, then I will show it to you. There is still time to stop the key from turning, but first it must be found." It held up the Chief, Six and Jun. "You three will search one likely spotâ€¦" It held up the Elite, Carter, and Emile. "And you three will search another. Fate had us meet as foes, but this ring will make us brothers!" And with that, the creature flicked the tentacles holding the six, and they all teleported to their destinations.

**Covenant Holy City, High Charity**

The three Spartans, the Chief, Jun, and Six, were teleported into the

Covenant city, High Charity. More specifically, into the room where the Prophet of Truth was addressing the Covenant on the finding of the Index. The Chief looked at a nearby Grunt. "Boo!" The Grunt squealed in terror and threw its Needler into the air. The Chief caught it, and aimed it at Truth. The Brute Honor Guards to either side of the Prophet put their spears between the Demons and their hierarchs. Truth looked at the Spartans with a look of disgust. "Kill the Demons!" Six looked at the Prophet. "What the fuck did you say about me?" The platform that the hierarchs were on lowered, leaving the Spartans to deal with the Brute Honor Guards.

Since neither Six nor Jun had any weapons, theirs being lost in the lake along with the Chief's, the Master Chief was forced to deal with the Brutes alone, or so he thought. Six and Jun snuck around to the Brute's backs and stabbed them in their necks simultaneously, so as to not piss one off at its pack brother's death. Six and Jun each grabbed a Brute Plasma Rifle, and as they did, a group of Brutes and Grunts came out of the side entrances. Six threw his knife at a Brute, stabbing it in the eye and killing it, while Jun and the Chief blasted another with their weapons. When all the enemies were dead, Cortana told the Chief to put her down on one of the pedestals near the far door. He did, and she informed the group that Truth had the Index. She opened the doors, and the group proceeded further into High Charity.

As they went along, Cortana discovered a number of marine IFF tags below them. They journeyed down to the brig, or whatever it was, and found 2 groups of marines. After they had freed the marines, they went back up the gravity lift that had taken them down the lift. The Chief found an Energy Sword, which reminded Six that he still had his, plus his thruster pack. Cortana asked him how he could have forgotten about a jet pack on his back. "It's been a long day, what with hard-dropping onto the ring, killing a Prophet, having an intelligent conversation with the Flood, and being teleported here." The door in front of them opened and a lone Brute came through, chased by a group of Elites.

The Chief struck down the Brute, and was about to kill the Elites, when one of the Elites yelled to its allies, "Stop! Do not fire! the Demons share our goals: slaughter of the Brutes and the traitorous Prophets." The Elite turned to the Spartans. "Come with us, Demons, we shall slay the traitors Truth and Tartarus as allies, not as enemies!" Six turned to Jun. "What the hell just happened?" "We just gained an entire species worth of allies."

The group, now including 5 Elites, moved through towards the far tower, where Truth and Tartarus were supposed to be going. They came to a quartet of Honor Guards, who immediately sought to attack the Spartans, only to be stopped by the same Elite. "Stop, the Demons are with us, and we share mutual goals." The Honor Guards joined the group, and they soon came across another pair, who immediately assumed that the Spartans were working with them, and joined the group, which had grown to also include a pair of Hunters.

The group, now more like an assault force, for it had grown even more, adding 4 more Elites, but losing a Hunter and an Honor Guard, entered a large room where a group of 3 Elite Ultras were fighting a group of Brutes. Six drew his Sword, and he launched himself, using his thruster pack, into the middle. He killed one Brute, and then lured another onto the blade of an Ultra. The Ultra looked at him,

stunned. Six just nodded at it, and then helped an Honor Guard slay a pair of Brutes. The honor Guard looked like it smiled at him. The Ultras joined their group, and another pair of Hunters lumbered out of the nearby door, joining their group as well.

The force came to an open area, which the Spartans assumed was an atrium, where a group of 3 Elite Rangers were battling a swarm of Drones. The other Elites immediately engaged the Drones, killing off at least 20, but leaving at least twice that number still alive. Jun noticed a Rocket Launcher lying nearby (How did that get there? how indeed.) He picked it up and 'pulled a Chief'; he used both rockets to kill at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the remaining Drones. The Rangers killed off the last of them, then moved ahead to act as scouts for the group. (The group now consists of 9 Elite Minors, 5 Honor Guards, 3 Hunters, 3 Spartans, 3 Ultras, and 3 Rangers. That's 26 troops in all. Shiiiiiiiiit, that's huge.)

The Rangers contacted the Elite that had originally allied the Spartans and the Elites. "Leader, there is a lone Sangheli fighting two of the traitors up ahead." "Thank you, Ranger. Engage at your own discretion." "Yes, leader" The group moved on, and when they reached the next set of doors, the Elite looked at the Spartans. "Demons keep moving; the Honor Guards will accompany you. We will stay and keep this area clear of traitors." The Chief nodded at the Elite, and with the 5 Honor Guards, the Spartans moved through, finding the Rangers and the lone Minor fighting two Brute Honor Guards. Jun leapt forward and stabbed one through the heart with an Energy Sword he had found in a crate. The other was double-teamed by Six and the Minor: the Minor lured it towards Six, and he stabbed it up through the neck.

The Minor joined now thinned group, and they journeyed on. Cortana contacted the Chief. "Slipspace rupture. It's _In Amber Clad_" Sure enough, the frigate zoomed on by and headed for what appeared to be the far tower. "Hailing" no response. I'll keep trying, but I'm not detecting any human life signs aboard." One of the Honor Guards looked at the Spartans. "Demons, that ship is infested with the Flood, there is no point in going after it." He turned to the other Sangheli. "It was only a matter of time before the Parasite found and infiltrated our holy city. Once we have slain the traitors, we shall return, and cleanse the Flood from our city!" The other Sangheli roared in agreement, and the group moved on.

The group mixed more when not in combat, instead of the Spartans leading the Elites; some of the Honor Guards were now conversing with the Spartans. Six was in a rather interesting conversation with one. "Why do you hate the Brutes?" "After the Prophets ordered our annihilation, Tartarus, the Brute Chieftain, took the Sacred Icon, what you call the 'Index', from our Arbiter, the most loyal subject in the Sangheli race. Retrieving it was the Arbiter's responsibility, bestowed upon him by the Prophets themselves after we found this ring. Tartarus then proceeded to kill the Arbiter, throwing him down the abyss where, only moments before, he had retrieved the Icon." "What does the Arbiter's armor look like? Before we were sent here, we found a Sangheli that looked very much different from the rest." "He wears black armor, according to our tradition, and does not have many of the functions that our armor does. His headpiece covers the entire center of his face, instead of ours, which do not cover our mouths. His combat harness does not cover his entire torso, only part of it." "We saw one just like that, alive and kicking, underneath the

Library. Sounds like he was thrown there by Tartarus. Two of our other Demons went with him." "Astounding! He is alive!" The Elite turned to the other Elites. "Brothers, the Arbiter lives!" The other Elites looked at him, astounded at the news.

The Elites, rallied by the news that their Arbiter was alive, pushed on in earnest. They came to an area where two Phantoms were waiting. The Elites charged, intent on boarding the dropships and killing the Brutes and the Prophets. Just before they could board, the Phantoms took off for the ring. "Damnit!" "It is alright, brother, we shall follow them to the ring." The Chief looked at the other two Spartans.

"That Brute, Tartarus, has the Index, and Commander Keyes and Sgt. Johnson, he can activate the ring." Six looked up at him. "That's not good. We need to follow them, wherever they're going. Where are they going, exactly?" Cortana spoke up. "Maybe that Prophet over there knows." A nav point appeared on their HUDs and they turned, noticing the Prophet of Mercy at the mercy of a Flood Infection Form. The Master Chief walked up to him. "Your pal, where's he going?" "Earthâ€¦ to finish what we started." The Chief pulled the Infection Form off of the Prophet, and both the Flood form and the Prophet died. The Chief stood back up. "Cortana, is there any way we can follow the Prophet back to earth? We won't do any good here?" "There is a way to reach that tower- like structure over there, which is where Truth appears to be headed." Six looked over at it. "What about the Brute? It has all the necessary components to activate the ring, doesn't it?" "If he does, I'll detonate _In Amber Clad_'s reactors, just like the Chief did to the _Pillar of Autumn_, the blast will destroy this city and the ring. Not a very original plan but we know it will work." The Chief walked over to the nearest pedestal, where Cortana's avatar appeared. He went to put his hand on the pedestal, but was stopped. "I don't want to chance a remote detonation again. I need to stay here."

The Chief looked back at the other two. "You two go with the Elites and stop that Brute, I'll follow Truth back to Earth." Six stepped forward. "Not alone, you won't." Jun, who was completely silent throughout the whole thing, stepped forward as well. "Couldn't we just contact Emile and Carter and see if they can assist the Elites, seeing as they are already helping one." The Chief looked at him. "Good point, try it and see what happens."

Jun keyed his comm. "Noble 3 to Noble 1 and Noble 4, do you copy, over?" There was silence for about 10 seconds, then, "Noble 3, this is Noble 4, I read you, Jun. What do you need?" "The Covenant have captured Commander Keyes and Sgt. Johnson and plan to use them to activate the ring. A Brute Chieftain by the name of Tartarus has just left the giant space station in a Phantom for the control room. We need to know if you can intercept him." "We will. We were on our way there anyway to find the Index." "You won't find it there; the Brute has it." Solid copy, Jun." Where are the Elite and Carter?" "You mean the Arbiter? He's gone to 'make the Brutes pay for what they have done', while Carter and I are waiting for him by a Scarab that we stole." Six had tuned in to the conversation, and at the mention of the Arbiter, he said, "I knew that was the one he was talking about!" He had forgotten that he was on the channel, which meant that Emile heard it too. "Six, what are you talking about?" "We made an alliance with the Elites, and one of them mentioned the Arbiter. They thought he was dead." Another voice, deeper, came over. "So, my brothers

think me dead. They will be in for a surprise." "Emile, was that the Arbiter?" "Yeah, he just grabbed a Banshee, and Johnson is here with us too." "That's a relief." Johnson tuned in to the channel. "Those dumb apes didn't stand a chance against my beloved Corps!" There were evidently at least two marines with him, because the Spartans in High Charity heard an excited "Hoo-Rah!" as he said this. Emile told them that they had forged an alliance with the Elites as well, albeit more slowly than the Chief had.

Jun closed the channel, and just as he did, a Pelican crashed on the platform across from them. Cortana informed them that the Gravemind, the creature beneath the Library, had used them, and that In Amber Clad was its intended method of delivery. "Wait, I'm reading a Slipspace rupture inside the city." The Chief looked at her. "Truth is going to jump?" "No, something coming in." Just then, what looked like a piece of a Covenant Corvette came out of Slipspace, and crashed near them. The Master Chief looked at it suspiciously. "Another Flood-infested ship?" A large figure climbed out, and when it jumped out of the debris, Six recognized it instantly.

"No! It's Jorge."

15. Chapter 15

Chapter 15- Old Friends, New Allies

****Author's Notes-** He has returned! Not by popular demand, but rather my own wanting him back, Jorge has come back! I was surprised that no one wanted him back. "I am shocked, almost too shocked for words." As always rate and review (no I will not be going crazy about it this time, I have recovered from rampancy), and PM me if you're interested in beta-reading or moderating the forum, or if you want me to beta-read for you. Don't be shy; I don't bite, I would be very happy to do so. I know it says I'm on hiatus, but just give me a PM, and I'll give you my email address to email the chapters to. Just one thing: if you do want me to beta-read for you, please send it as a Word Document. I don't have a Mac, or the software to read that type of file. Sorry for the inconvenience. I sadly cannot moderate forums due to my lack of a consistent internet connection. Anyway, back to book matters. To address a possible review, I will not bring Kat back simply because her death could not be disputed: She was shot through the head with a Needle Rifle by a Sangheili Field Marshal. (Wort, Wort, Wort [shoots Kat in the head] YAYZ IZ HEADSHOTZ A DEMONZ!) I know I brought Jorge and Carter back, but their deaths were disputable. So enjoy the sort-of novelization of High Charity. Now featuring Jorge-052 as Jorge-the badass with the machinegun-052.**

As Jorge climbed out of the wreckage of the Corvette, or at least a part of it, he looked around, and saw three figures watching him. Recognizing them as Spartans, he walked over to see who they were. He saw two that he instantly recognized as Six and Jun, and after reading the others FOF tag, he recognized him as well. "Hello, John. It's good to see you again." "How do you know my name?" Jorge removed his helmet. "Recognize me now?" "Not really, no." "Remember whenever Mendez used to call up Number 052, and we would have to ask which one?" "That I do remember. It is good to see another II alive and well, Jorge."

Six looked at the Chief. "Wait, so your name is John?" "Yeah, what of

it?" "Nothing, I just didn't know you had an actual name." "Don't you?" "I do, I just don't remember it." "(Sarcastically) Okay." Jorge walked over to Six. "Looks like Reach has kept on being good to me." "Seems so. Looks like you'll have to return the favor later." "Do you know if any of the others survived?" "Emile and Carter did, but Kat was killed by an Elite Field Marshal." "That's a shame." Jun walked over. "I hate to break up the reunion, but don't we have a Prophet to catch?" Jorge looked over at him. "What's a Prophet?" "They're the leaders of the Covenant, and one is going to try and conquer Earth." "Wait, so the Covenant found Earth?" "About two months after they glassed Reach." "Fan-fucking-tastic." John looked over at the other Spartans. "Emile and Carter are taking care of a Brute Chieftain that wants to activate the rings." "What rings?" John looked over at the pedestal again. "Cortana, do you want to explain it to him?" "I can, unless you do." "You know more about it than I do." "Okay, then."

Her avatar turned to Jorge. "The rings that the Chief refers to are an array called Halo, a weapon built by the Forerunners, an ancient race that has gone extinct, to kill off the food source of a virulent parasite known as the Flood." "And that would be?" "Any living thing that has enough mass. Humans, Covenant, whatever. We're all equally edible." "That's great news." "The rings appear to be structured a lot like Earth used to be, back about 2000 years ago. That means no gigantic skyscrapers, no settlements, nothing that isn't critical to the functioning of the rings. They also appear to have Earth-normal gravity, and an atmosphere nearly identical to Earth's before the overpopulation polluted it." "How many of them are there?" "Counting the one John blew up, 7." "So now there's only six." "Correct." She addressed the entire group. "There's a Pelican on a collision course for this pad, get off of it, NOW!" They all ran, and sure enough, a Pelican came screaming in and crashed right where they had been standing. They all saw the little sickly-green things come out of it, and they all instantly assumed the same thing, but Jorge spoke it. "That's the Flood, isn't it, John?" "Sure is. Get ready for a fight." Cortana told them that Flood-controlled dropships were touching down all over High Charity. They all moved towards a doorway that she had directed them to.

Jorge managed to pull the machine gun turret off of the downed Pelican after the Flood Forms had been dealt with, commenting that it wasn't his preferred weapon, but that it would do and the group moved on, soon coming to the gravity lift that would take them up. Cortana disabled the lift once they reached the top, and they all heard Truth over the loudspeaker. "Shall we let the Flood consume our holy city? Turn High Charity into another of their wretched hives? No enemy has ever withstood our might. The Flood too shall fail." Jorge looked at John. "Does he ever shut up?" "Not that I know of." The group moved on, coming to a transit room where several Drones and a Brute were fighting a group of Flood Combat Forms.

Jorge moved forward to kill them, but was stopped by John. "Wait, let them fight it out, then we'll kill the winner." The Flood emerged victorious against the Drones and Brute, but before they could infect the Brute, they were ripped apart by a hail of machine gun rounds. "Ha! Too easy!" The Forms that weren't completely destroyed got back up and charged at the Spartans. "Oh, shit." They heard a BANG, and a grenade flew towards the Flood Forms. When it detonated, they were ripped apart, all of them this time. The Spartans turned to the source, and found Six holding a smoking Grenade Launcher. He tossed

another grenade up and down rhythmically. "Found another present from Johnson." Jorge asked him what he meant. "When we were going to kill another of these Prophets, one of the guys, Sgt. Johnson, always gave Emile grenades for these that were way more powerful than necessary." "I assume you just used one?" "No, that was a regular one. These pack way more of a punch."

Jorge just shook his head, and they moved through, coming to an open area filled with Flood and Brutes. "Now would be a great time to use that grenade, Six." "I was just thinking the same thing, Chief." He loaded the grenade, and launched it, killing all of the Brutes and most of the Flood Forms. The group did away with the rest of the Flood and moved on through. They found a gravity lift, and Cortana told them that it would take them to the Prophet's personal chambers. "Maybe we'll find out what Covvie porn looks like." "Really, Six, REALLY!?" "What? I'm just saying, John. Maybe we will. You don't get to be that megalomaniacal without watching LOTS of it." "Just keep it to yourself next time, Six. And don't call me John. Only he and Dr. Halsey can" The Chief pointed at Jorge. "Fine, fine, I won't."

They entered the chambers, and Six's thoughts about Covvie porn were dashed. "So much for that idea, Six." "Sorry I said anything, Jun." Cortana told them that she couldn't delay the launch much longer, and that the next lift would take them to a conduit running to the Forerunner ship. When they reached the top, they found a pack of Brutes, supported by a Jackal Sniper, battling the Flood. When Six pulled his Sword to fight them, the Chief stopped him. "We need to get to that ship, now." Six tuned his thruster pack so that it would allow him to fly, and launched himself towards the other end of the room, where Cortana was waiting to activate a small gravity lift to allow them access to the conduit. The Chief, Jun, and Jorge were forced to fight their way across the room, killing any that stood in their way. They reached the other side, and they rode the grav lift into the conduit. Just as they were about to reach the ship, it took off and the conduit shut down, depositing them on the outer hull of the ship.

Cortana contacted them one last time before they left High Charity. "When you get back to Earth, good luck. The Chief looked back at the city. "When we finish with Truth," Cortana interrupted him. "Don't make a girl a promise, if you know you can't keep it." The ship left the city, and amidst the battle between Brute and Elite- controlled ships, jumped to Slipspace.

16. Chapter 16, The Great Journey, Part 1

Chapter 16: The Control Room, Part 1

****Author's Notes:** Chapter 18 marks the start of the Halo 3 section of the book! The book will be coming along more slowly now because school started up not long ago. But, as the wise and powerful Jack Hargreave once said, "We've come so far, you cannot fail me now!" I am considering making another fanfic once I finish with the H3 section of the book, kind of as a branch-off to the main book. More details as we approach the end of the H3 section. As always, rate and review, and post on the forum. If you can't find it, give me a PM and I will get you the web address for it. You can also PM me if you want me to do any betareading for you, but I cannot moderate forums due to my lack of a consistent interwebs connection. For now though, enjoy

the sort-of novelization of Uprising. REVIEW!**

After their encounter with the creature beneath the Library, The Arbiter, Emile, and Carter were teleported to a cliff overlooking a large Forerunner structure, which Thel called the control room. "Come, Demons, the Icon must be inside." Emile did not move. The Arbiter wheeled around when he realized that he was not. "Would you rather stand around all day and let the Prophets activate this ring, thus killing us all, or put aside our differences and save both our species?" "I'd rather go alone than work with _you_." "You are a fool to think you can defeat Tartarus alone, Demon!" Carter walked back to Emile, and put his hand on his shoulder. "The Elite is right, Emile. Even if you could get to the control room, it's probably guarded by numerous Covenant forces. We need to work together to stop them. It's like I told Six when he joined NOBLE Team, 'That lone wolf shit stays behind.'" "Fine, I'll work with the split-chin."

The Arbiter made a sound like a growl of irritation. Emile turned to him, picked up a nearby shotgun, and cocked it. "Is there something else you would prefer to be called?" "You, Demon, may know me as the Arbiter." "Alright, Arbiter." No one heard him whisper, "Fucking split-jaw." The three moved on in silence, coming across numerous dead Elites but no Brutes, living or dead. At the first sight of Brutes, the Arbiter grabbed an Energy Sword from one of his dead brothers, and charged them. The Brutes turned at Thel, amazed at what they saw. "What, I thought he was dead!" This Brute was the first to die, and its pack brothers soon joined it in whatever they called oblivion. The three moved on towards a smaller structure, and a nearby door open.

An Elite came out wielding an Energy Sword. When it saw the Spartans behind the Arbiter. It ran at them. "Arbiter, watch out! There are Demons behind you!" "No, brother. They are our allies in this time of peril." The Elite's voice became graver. "Look what these Brutes have done to us, Arbiter. They have shed our brother's blood, and for that, they will DIE. If these Demons wish to help us, then I will follow you, Arbiter, and your companions." Just then, a group of Elite drop pods crashed onto the ground below them, carrying 2 Minors and a Zealot. "A Zealot. He's a little late for the party." The Zealot looked up at Emile. "I will spare your life, Demon, Only because the Arbiter tolerates your presence."

The group moved into the structure, entering a large cave-like structure. Carter noticed that the Arbiter had disappeared, along with the rest of the Elites. Just as he was about to snipe a Brute with his newly-acquired Carbine, the Arbiter appeared out of thin air, and stabbed the Brute through the chest. Carter thought, "Huh, Active Camouflage. I need to get my hands on that." The rest of the Elites did the same, and soon a firefight had ensued. Carter heard one Brute say, "The Demons are working with the scum? Warn the Chieftain immediately!" This Brute and the ones that ran to warn the Chieftain were promptly stabbed by Emile, who had taken a Sword from one of the dead Elites outside. A nearby Elite saw this, and yelled, "Good kills, Demon! I doubt I could have done that alone!"

Emile simply nodded at the Zealot, and they all moved through, killing numerous Grunts, Jackals and Drones, and Brutes. One of the Grunts ran at the group, holding a grenade from a nearby grenade launcher. "I'm gonna pop the top off a can of whoop-ass!" It was instantly rewarded with a plasma grenade to the face, causing it to

run back at its Brute commander and Grunt peers, now yelling, "Get it off me! No, not again!" The grenade blew up, killing all but one of the Grunts, which cried, "No! They killed Yapyap!" This Grunt was rewarded with a swift backhand to the face, killing it instantly. "You didn't have to torture it _that_ badly, Emile." "Shove it, Carter." (Insubordination at its finest.)

The group eventually exited the structure, and Emile ran towards a Brute Captain (The ones with the flags) and ran his sword through its gut. One of the Minors heard its dying screams and remarked, "I heard that over here!" They all found Ghosts around, and Emile restocked on shotgun shells from one of the dead Brutes. They rode on, and the Arbiter, Carter, and Emile left the other Elites behind to advance closer to the control room.

The three fought their way to the canyon floor, and encountered a Brute encampment. Two Wraith tanks came in from their left, and the Arbiter abandoned his Ghost, and boarded one of the tanks. He bashed open the roof of the control hub, and threw the Brute out, but not before running his Sword through it. He entered the tank, and blasted a group of Brutes that were pinning the Spartans down. More Elite drop pods crashed down into the middle of the encampment, and the new group entered what appeared to be a Brute armory.

"Looks like the Brutes were trying to dig in here, permanently." "Why do they have such a fascination with our shotguns? This is the second time I've seen them being used by the Brutes." "Stow the bullshit, Emile, and grab more shells. You'll need them." He noticed that the Arbiter had grabbed a shotgun as well, and a fuel rod gun. "Finally accepting our weapons, eh Arbiter?" "I only use this, **THING**, because it is abundant here." The three moved on through a cave, destroying a Ghost and a pair of Brutes and Jackals.

On the other side, there was another Wraith patrolling around. When it saw the three, it moved over to them, and R'tas Vadumee popped out of the hatch. "I suppose that these Demons are allied with us now, Arbiter." "They are." "What has happened to the Councilors? Were theyâ€¦" "Murdered, by the Brutes." "Vile, disloyal, beasts! They shall pay for what they have done this I swear!" They all saw the two Phantoms heading towards the control room, and knew that Tartarus was aboard one of them.

17. Chapter 17

Chapter 17: The Control Room, Part 2

****Author's Notes-** This is it, the last chapter of the Halo 2 section. The aftermath of this will be the start of the Halo 3 section. Rate and review, like usual, and give me a PM if you want help with a fanfic at all. I may also expand the story into the Reclaimer Saga instead of ending at the end of H4, but that is quite questionable because I will not be purchasing an Xbox One for a while for obvious reasons ****_****(The price is too damn high!)****_****, but for now, enjoy the final chapter of Halo 2, The Great Journey.******

Thel Vadamee, R'tas Vadumee, Carter and Emile all watched the pair of Phantoms soared overhead, one turning around towards where they had come from, and the other stopping near the control room. The Arbiter glanced at the Wraith that R'tas had stolen. "What is that place?"

"Where the Councilors were meant to watch the consecration of the Icon. The start of the Great Journey." "We must get inside." "Then mount-up, Arbiter. I know a way to break those doors."

A Spectre LRV, similar to a Warthog in purpose, pulled up beside them, and the Zealot that had been assisting them jumped out and offered the Arbiter the operator's seat. "I'll take the gunner's position." R'tas jumped back in the Wraith, and the 2 Spartans jumped onto the side seats of the Spectre. As R'tas guided them towards a tower-like structure, they came across a pair of Ghosts. The Arbiter opened fire with the plasma cannon on the back, destroying one within seconds, and the other was decimated by a direct hit from a plasma mortar from R'tas' Wraith.

They came across a Scarab waiting to be activated, and Emile pointed out the obvious. "There, that's our ticket to the control room!" "We noticed, Demon." "Arbiter, there is a path up to the Scarab in the cliff wall. I'll follow soon." "Thank you, Commander." The Arbiter and the Spartans disembarked from the Spectre, and as they came towards the doorway to the path up, they found themselves face-to-face with 4 Brutes and 2 Wraith tanks. Emile groaned inwardly. "Fuck this." He pulled the Grenade Launcher off of his back, loaded the grenade that the Grunt that had charged them and been rewarded with a plasma grenade to the face had been holding, and hoped that it was one of Johnson's.

The grenade flew straight and true, and was in fact one of Johnson's, because when it blew up, it killed all of the Covie bastards and blew up their Wraiths.

The three entered the structure, and found a pair of Hunters in the hallways ahead. "Just FUCKING perfect." "Shut up and quit bitching, Emile." "Blow it out your ass, Carter." (Another fine display of insubordination from Emile) A Sangheili jumped onto the nearby stack of crates, and upon noticing the Arbiter. Yelled at the Hunters, who had come out of the hallways and were preparing to attack the group, "Hold your fire! Hunters have come to our aid, Arbiter. They will fight by our side."

The Hunters charged into the next room, and immediately were beset by a pack of Brutes on an elevated platform. The Arbiter had already cloaked, ran up the ramp to one side, AND rammed his Sword through the gut of the leading Captain. The Brutes dying screams alerted its brothers, and they all opened fire on the Arbiter.

Carter ran up the ramp, and was nearly killed by the energy beam of one of the Hunters. "JESUS CHRIST! Tell that thing to watch where it's shooting!" The Elites and the Hunters ignored him, and Emile didn't hear him because he was too busy trying to kill the 7 Brutes that had emerged from the doorway behind them. He drove his kukri into the neck of one while simultaneously blowing the guts of another out with his shotgun. He reloaded and blew the heads off of two more Brutes, including the leading Captain. Emile jumped out of the way just as a Hunter slammed its giant-ass shield into the head of another, covering the rest in blood. This pissed them off enough to make them throw down their weapons and charge at the Hunters. Emile jumped on one's back and snapped its neck, while the Arbiter picked the other up by the neck and rammed his Sword through its gut.

The Elite and the Hunters stayed behind, while the Arbiter and the

Spartans continued onto a bridge that was crawling with Jackals and Drones. "Fuck this." Carter pulled out a Rocket Launcher that he had acquired in the Brute armory, and annihilated the Drones and some of the Jackals by using both rockets. One of the Phantoms, the one that had veered off towards the Scarab, dropped into view and opened fire on the three as soon as it saw them. At the end of the bridge, the group dove through the doorway just as the Phantom pelted the area with enough plasma to turn them to glass.

The next room they came to turned out to be a detention-type area, holding 2 Sangheili Councilors and a pair of Hunters, guarded by 3 Jackal Snipers and a pack of Brutes.

The Arbiter faded from view again and proceeded to "quietly" murder all of the Brutes in the room (*cough cough* decapitation *cough cough*) while Carter and Emile sliced open the throats of the Snipers. As Emile and Carter destroyed the cell field generators, Thel was busy killing more Brutes, but instead of decapitating them, he castrated them, and then left them to suffer. Carter shot each in the head twice for the satisfaction, not to end their suffering. The Councilors followed the Arbiter and the Spartans up to the platform that would grant them access to the Scarab.

"Arbiter, if you take care of those Brutes, we'll make a break for the Scarab and get it warmed up." "Alright." They heard the Captain of the group talking to another Brute over a comm channel. "â€|Quietly. Now, kill the rest." Carter and Emile took off in a dead sprint for the Scarab, and found a very familiar Sergeant-Major right behind them as they climbed to the controls. "What the fuck are you doing working with that split-jawed son-of-a-bitch?" "It's a long fucking story, Johnson, and I don't feel like telling it right now."

They got the Scarab started up, and Johnson turned it around so that he could walk to the back and talk to the Arbiter. "Listen, you don't like me and I sure as hell don't like you. But if we don't get to that control room, Mr. Mohawk is going to activate this ring, and we're all going to die." "Tartarus has locked himself inside the control room." "Well, we just happen to have stumbled onto the key. Come on, grab a Hornet and give us some cover." "I will take a Banshee and make the Brutes pay for what they have done."

Emile heard his comm buzz to life. "Noble 3 to Noble 1 and Noble 4, do you copy, over? Emile hesitated for about 10 seconds, unsure if it really was Jun. "Noble 3, this is Noble 4, I read you, Jun. What do you need?" "The Covenant have captured Commander Keyes and Sgt. Johnson, and plan to use them to activate the ring. A Brute Chieftain by the name of Tartarus has just left the giant space station in a Phantom for the control room. We need to know if you can intercept him." "We will. We were on our way there anyway to find the Index." "You won't find it there; The Brute has it." "Solid copy, Jun" "Where are the Elite and Carter?" "You mean the Arbiter? He's gone to 'make the Brutes pay for what they have done', while Carter and I are waiting for him by a Scarab that we stole." Six interrupted the conversation, and he seemed amazed. "I knew that was the one he was talking about!" "Six what are you talking about?" "We made an alliance with the Elites, and one of them mentioned the Arbiter. They thought he was dead." Apparently, the Arbiter had been listening to the conversation somehow, and jumped in as well. "So, my brothers think me dead. They will be in for a surprise." "Emile, was that the

Arbiter?" "Yeah, he just grabbed a Banshee, and Johnson is here with us too." "That's a relief." Johnson and his marines had also tuned in to the channel, and Johnson proclaimed proudly, "Those dumb apes didn't stand a chance against my beloved Corps!" The marines shouted a lively "Hoo-Rah!" into the comm. Emile told them how they had also forged an alliance with the Elites, and the channel was closed.

Emile and Carter jumped out of the back of the Scarab. "She's all yours, Sergeant. We'll take a Hornet." They found said Hornet around the corner of the building, and Emile jumped onto one of the side seats while Carter took the pilot's seat. "Don't crash us into Johnson's Scarab!" "What makes you think I would?" "The last time you got near a Scarab while piloting an aircraft." "Right. Almost forgot about that."

The Hornet, Banshee, and Scarab charged towards the control room with very few problems, except for the occasional Shade Turret or Banshee air patrol. They got back to where they had started, and Johnson unceremoniously blew the doors to the control room off of the attached walls.

The Arbiter and the Spartans landed on the now smoking and burning platform and charged through the doorway into a room where there were no enemies at all. "Motion tracker shows 7 Brutes moving towards this room. Find cover now!" The three hid in a small trench-like dip that concealed their presence from the Brutes. The Brutes, finding nothing, began to chatter. "I heard that the filth are working with Demons." "DEMONS? How is that possible? They hate each other!" "Not as much as they hate us now." "I just hope that it wasn't them who blew up the door." "Of course it was, nimrod! What would you expect, a tiny group of Grunts?" "Kind of." They heard the Brute get back-pawed by the one that called it a nimrod. "They could be in here now, you know. The filthy Elites might have shared their active camouflage technology with the Demons." "CLOAKED DEMONS! Oh, Gods, don't ever let _that_ happen."

The Arbiter cloaked, ran up behind the Brute that had been back-pawed, and ran his Sword through its gut. "BOO!" The Brutes all turned at this, which gave Carter and Emile the time they needed to kill 4 more of them. The other two were so pissed by this point, having just witnessed a Killtacular medal being achieved (That's 5 kills within 4 seconds of each other), that they charged the Arbiter and were rewarded with a knife and a kukri to the back. Carter and Emile grabbed their knives and followed the Arbiter towards the control room.

Inside, they found Tartarus, along with 4 Brutes, trying to coerce Commander Keyes to activate the ring. The Arbiter stepped a little bit more towards the Brutes than the Spartans did. "Tartarus, stop." The Chieftain and his entourage turned toward the voice, and almost gaped at the sight of the Arbiter, alive and kicking. "What? Impossible." "Put down the Icon." "Put it down? And disobey the Hierarchs?" "There are things about Haloâ€¦ even the Prophets do not understand." The Brutes around Tartarus gasped in shock at the Arbiter's display of heresy, and began to move towards him, but were stopped by Tartarus. "Take care, Arbiter. What you say is heresy." "Is it?" He now turned to address 343 Guilty Spark, the Oracle that Thel had captured when he had been sent to kill a Heretic Leader. "Oracle, what is Halo's purpose?" "Collectively, the sevenâ€¦" he

didn't finish, because Tartarus grabbed him and shook him a bit. "NOT ANOTHER WORD!" Another voice came from behind the Arbiter. "Pleaseâ€|" Thel and the Spartans turned to find Sergeant Johnson aiming a Beam Rifleâ€| right at Tartarus's face. "Don't shake the light-bulb." The Brutes around the Chieftain started to move towards Johnson. "If you want your brain to stay inside your head, I'd tell your boys there to chill!" Tartarus gave a low growl, and the Brutes backed off. Johnson turned his head to the Arbiter. "Go ahead, do your thing." The Arbiter once again addressed 343. "The Sacred Rings, what are they?" "Weapons of last resort: built by the Forerunners and designed to kill off any sentient life capable of sustaining the Flood." "And, what happened to the Forerunners?" "After exhausting every tactical option, my creators activated the array and every sentient being within three radii of the galactic centerâ€| died, as planned. Would you like to see the relevant data?" There was a pause. "Tartarus, the Prophets have betrayed us." Tartarus threw 343 Guilty Spark at Johnson, forced the Index into Commander Keyes hands and forced her to start the activation of the rings. "No, Arbiter. The Great Journey has begun, and the Jirhalnahe, not the Sangheili, shall be the Prophet's escort!"

Emile immediately loaded the last of Johnson's grenades into his GL, and fired at the group. The blast killed Tartarus's guards, but barely even scratched the Chieftain. He jumped onto the firing platform, which had separated into three sections when the ring was activated, and a horde of Sangheili followed, accompanied by Noble 1 and Noble 4. The Arbiter hung back and helped Johnson snipe the Chieftain, aware of what the giant hammer that Tartarus was carrying could do. When Johnson and the Arbiter took down the shield that enveloped the Chieftain, the horde attacked and severely wounded Tartarus, but one swing of the hammer killed almost all of the Elites, except for the Zealot that had been helping the Spartans since they were teleported. Another swing sent the Zealot careening into a nearby wall, crushing its organs and killing it instantly. The Arbiter jumped down to assist the Spartans, and almost struck the killing blow, had Carter not been such a good thrower of combat knives: the knife stuck Tartarus in the brain just as Johnson took down his shields. Unbeknownst to them, Commander Keyes was already moving in to remove the Index and stop the sequence.

The ring fired prematurely, and thus did not have enough of a charge to kill anything. The blast shut off the lights in the control room, and the group, minus the Arbiter and the Spartans, who were mopping up the last of the Brutes in the room, all convened around a nearby display, with Johnson hitching a ride on the Monitor. Keyes looked puzzled at what was on the display. "What's that?" "A beacon." "What's it doing?" "Communicating at superluminal speeds with a frequency ofâ€|" "Communicating with what?" "The other installations." "Show me." "Fail-safe protocol: in the event of unexpected shutdown, the entire system will move to standby status. All remaining platforms are now ready for remote activation." "Remote activation? From here?" "Don't be ridiculous." Johnson interrupted the exchange. "Listen, tinker-bell, don't make meâ€|" Keyes cut him off. "Then where? Where would someone go to activate the other rings?" Spark paused, as if amazed that they did not know the answer. "Why the Arkâ€| of course." The Arbiter and the Spartans returned. "And where, Oracle, is that?"

Chapter 18: Prepare to Drop

****Authors Notes-** The Halo 2 section of the book is done, and now we begin with Halo 3. This has always been one of my favorite games, except for Reach. This chapter will be very long and original, save for a few spots where I draw on the game for knowledge. But for now, rate, review, and enjoy. Off Topic, sorry for the large gap between updates, this chapter was very long and tedious and hard to write.**

_Earth Defense Platform Cairo, Coordinating defense of Earth.
December 25, 2552 (_Merry Christmasâ€¦| NOT!)

As the Battle for Earth raged in orbit above the planet, and the Covenant secured the ruins of New Mombasa, the Forerunner Ship emerged from Slipspace and raced towards the planet. On the bridge of the _Cairo_, one of the officers turned in his chair to face Lord Hood, who was looking out of the viewport at the battle. "Sir, new contact, Unknown classification!" "Then it isn't one of ours. Destroy it!" "Yes, sir." Another officer informed him of an outbound communication from the ship. "Patch it through, Lieutenant." "Aye, sir." The speakers on the bridge buzzed to life. "This is Spartan 117. Can anyone hear me? Over." "Lieutenant, isolate that signal, now." "Already on it sir. Establishing link to Sierra 117 now. Go ahead, sir." "Master Chief, you mind telling me what you're doing on that ship?" "Sir, finishing this fight." The first officer told him that another new contact had been found. "What is it, Ensign?" "Too far away to tell, sir. Maybe the Chief can tell us." "Master Chief, we just picked up a new contact. Do you see it?" "Yes, sir. Jun, what is it?" "Looks like one of the old Phoenix-class colony ships." "That can't be right. The only two that survived the war to date are the _Crossroads of Sol_ and the _Spirit of Fire_, but both are reported MIA." "Sir, transmission, from the ship." "Patch it through, Jun" "On it." The comm unit filled with static with only a few breaks. "Mayday ~~~ This is ~~~ of the UNSC ~~~ request ~ assist ~~~." "I can't clear it up, sir." "Alright, Jun. Chief, send one of your Spartans to secure the ship." "On it, sir."

John-117 was surveying his remaining Spartans to decide which to send to the Phoenix-class ship, when Six stepped forward. "I'll go, Chief. I'm the only one with a thruster pack to help get there." "Alright, Six. Jun, can you get a lock on the ships position and an outbound trajectory for him?" "I can try, but I'm no whiz at this stuff like Kat was." "Well, at least give it a shot." "I've got a lock! I'd guess about 60% accuracy. That's the best I can do." "I'll take it. Chief, if this goes south; it's been an honor to serve with you again." "It's been an honor for me too, James." James-005, one of the last remaining SPARTAN II's, took a running start, and with the help of his thruster pack, took a giant leap off of the back of the Forerunner ship.

Jorge skimmed through the public roster of all the SPARTAN-II's, and found that all but a few were listed as MIA or WIA. He closed the roster, and opened up the ONI logs, and found that only a handful were truly MIA, with most being KIA. One of the truly MIA Spartans was James-005, and his CSV had a file attached. Jorge opened it, and found a video from John's last mission on Reach. It showed James' EVA pack taking a hit from a Needler and the fuel venting violently when the projectile shattered, throwing James into space. He closed the

file, and opened up a log of all ****KNOWN**** SPARTAN-II missions. He found the file, and opened a private com channel to John. "John, James is reported as MIA, says on the logs that he went missing on Reach." "I'm well aware of that." "How is he here then? This seems awfully suspicious." "It did for me too, Jorge. Then Cortana told me that Six was James just before we left High Charity." "Alright, but this still seems a little odd to me." (****Here comes a really long part. Longer than Chapter 5.****)

James reflected his last time using a thruster pack in space. He, John, and another Spartan, Linda, who ironically shared Jorge's service tag, were sent to destroy an unsecured navigation database during the Fall of Reach which would have led the Covenant straight to Earth. As the three were hunting for the ship, a Covenant carrier had deployed EVA troops, many with Needlers or Needle Rifles. The Covenant troops opened fire, filling the void with needles, one of which had hit James' EVA pack, causing the fuel to vent quite violently. He had ditched the pack, but not before being shot into orbit around Reach. He had drifted for about an hour before something had grabbed his leg and proceeded to pull him down to the planet's surface, which he found to be another Spartan, NOBLE Six. Six had been looking "up" for a while, and James followed him to find another Super-Carrier being torn into three pieces by a Slipspace bomb. The two had crashed near the city of New Alexandria, which was currently under siege by the Covenant. In the city, they learned of an ongoing evacuation at Traxus Towers. They had ventured through the sub-levels of a nearby building, and found them infested with Suicide Grunts. One of them blew up near Six, which put him flat on his ass, and weakened his shielding and disabled his motion tracker. The pair found their way out and linked up with a group of marines trying to reach the evac site. "Kilo Dispatch, this is Kilo One-Seven, we've picked up a pair of Spartans." "Kilo One-Seven, I have ONI brass bitching and carrying on in my ear about God-knows-the-fuck-what. Please repeat that." "We picked up a pair of Spartans just now." "Good to know... Sergeant, I have a Spartan Commander requesting the service tags of those two. He says that he has two Spartans that are MIA." James tapped into the chatter. "Kilo Dispatch, this is Spartan-005 along with Spartan-312 of NOBLE Team. Tell the Commander that he lost one on the Covenant Super-Carrier that they destroyed in orbit." "Will do, Spartan. Help those marines however you can. There is an ongoing evacuation at Traxus Towers. They could use your help." "Got it, sir." The fireteam had fought their way to an adjacent building to Traxus when an ODSI approached the Spartans. "Spartans, I'm Sergeant Edward Buck, second-in-command of the 35th Air Tactics Squad of the 105th Drop Jet Infantry. We could use your help clearing a path to the evac site. There's a pair of jetpacks back this way." James noticed a bullfrog insignia of Buck's shoulder guard as he led the pair towards the jetpacks. Once James and Six had retrieved the packs, Buck led them out to a nearby ledge where another ODSI greeted them. "Welcome to the Bullfrogs! We're gonna jump to the other building way over there. Try to keep up, swabbies." As the Spartans and their new allies were jump-jetting across to their destination, a Brute with a jumpack launched into the air and tackled James to the ground. The Brute ripped off James' helmet and promptly beat the living shit out of him. The Brute also damaged several components of his armor before Six executed it with an M6G Magnum shot to the head. James' helmet had been thrown off of the platform and down to the city streets several hundred stories below. Six helped James up and the pair made it to Traxus Towers without any more incidents. As they finished clearing the building for evac, Kilo Dispatch contacted them

again. "Spartans, this is Kilo Dispatch, there's another ongoing evac a few clicks due west of your position, but they can't start because that Corvette over the city is destroying all of the transports. There's a pair missile batteries nearby that will drive off that corvette, but they're offline. I need you to get them back up and running, Spartans." "We're on it, Dispatch." A Falcon landed on the pad, and an ODS started barking orders. "Alright, boys and girls, the Spartans are leaving us to go activate the missile batteries in the nearby park. Sergeant Buck, I want you to go with them." "Sir? Wouldn't it be better if I stayed and helped keep the pad secure?" "DO NOT QUESTION MY ORDERS, SERGEANT, OR I WILL MAKE YOU GO ALONE!" "SIR, YES SIR!" "Now _that's _what I like to hear, marine!" James, Six and Buck climbed into the Falcon. "Buck, are you okay? You don't seem like you want to be here." "I don't. The reason I ended up with the Bullfrogs is because my old unit got slagged trying to defend the very battery we're going after." "Greatâ€¦ how long ago was that?" "About 48 hours ago." As they neared the park where the batteries were, a marine on the ground started briefing them. "Spartans, I'm Staff-Sergeant Augustus Cole, with the 22nd marine QRF. We're here to help you get those missile batteries back online, but we need to punch a hole into the park first. Covies have the place secured, so it's gonna be a fight." "Roger that, Staff Sergeant. Is there any armor in the area we can use?" "Negative, but there are a couple of Gauss Warthogs here with us." The Falcon landed practically on top of the marine QRF, and the Spartans, plus Buck, jumped out shooting, taking down a Jackal patrol pinning the marines down. A marine, presumably Cole, jogged up to them. "Man, am I glad to see you guys. Come on, the 'Hogs are this way." The trio jumped into one of the Gauss 'Hogs, while a trio of marines jumped into the other and sped off towards the park. James took off after them, and found the 'Hog a smoldering wreck after it was hit by a Wraith mortar round. "Damn, no survivors. Six, first missile battery's over there, you and Buck go activate that one, I'll get the other." "Roger." Six and Buck jumped out, and James sped off towards the other missile battery. When he got there and activated it, Six pinged him, indicating that he and Buck had done the same. "Spartans, it's Cole again. There should be an activator in the main building due north. Head on over and get those batteries firing again." "Roger that. Six, I'll meet you at the main walkway. Do you still have your jetpack?" "Of course I do, and so does Buck." "Good." A marker appeared on James' HUD, indicating where the activator was. Six and Buck joined him beneath the window where the marker was, and the trio jumped up to it. "Evac Control, this is evac transport Echo One, I got Covies all over my transport. I need to take off NOW." "Hang on, Echo One; Spartans are gonna clear the skies for you. It's now or never, Spartans. Hit the button and blow that bastard out of the sky." Six ran up to the activator, but before he could push the button, an Elite Field Marshall charged and stabbed him through his heart with its Energy Sword. "Weak and fragile Demon. Now you die." The Elite removed its Sword from Six's heart, ripped off his helmet, and decapitated Six. James, in a fit of rage, increased the thrust on his jet pack, and rocketed towards the Elite, tackling it to the ground and punching its face until it was a bloody pulp. Buck dragged him off of the mess and activated the missile batteries, driving off the corvette and allowing the evacuation transports to leave. "You saved many lives today, Spartans. Thank you. Echo One out." James heard Six's helmet comm burst with static. He walked over and put Six's helmet on. "â€¦Noble Two. Noble Six, this is Noble Two, do you copy?" "Noble Two, this is Spartan S-005. Six is KIA, as is Noble Five." "How do you know?" "Six was just decapitated by an Elite Field Marshall, and Noble Five

stayed behind on the Covenant Cruiser to detonate the bomb manually." "Alright, Spartan. We're sending in a dropship to bring you to the ONI building. Bring Six's body and armor as well." "Will do." James took off Six's helmet. "Buck, regroup with the Bullfrogs, I'm going to the ONI building to link up with his team." "You're not just going to leave him, are you?" "No. they want the body." "Okay. It's been an honor to fight with you, Spartan." "Likewise, trooper." James picked up Six's body and helmet, and walked towards the shore of the beachhead, dropping a flare when he got there. A Pelican dropship landed shortly thereafter and took him to the ONI building in the heart of the besieged city. When the dropship landed, James disembarked and another Spartan walked up to him. "I'm Carter, Noble Team's leader." "I'm James, probably one of the last Spartan II's on Reach. I'm sorry about Five and Six." "You did all you could, Spartan. For now though, let's get Six to the ONI scientists. They want to take a look at his helmet for any details they can use." James hefted Six's body over one shoulder, picked up his helmet with his free hand, and hauled both to the medical wing of the ONI building. "Put his helmet here, Petty Officer. We're anxious to retrieve the data from the Corvette that he destroyed." A little while later, the scientist walked back up to him. "Petty Officer, there's a message in the helmet that appears to be directed to you." James put on Six's helmet, and played the audio file. "James, I know that your armor is damaged beyond repair, but mine isn't. I ask that you make the scientists at ONI repair my armor and give it to you, so that you can be the soldier that I was meant to be. I'll see you on the other side of life, Spartan." James turned to the scientist. "Can you repair his armor?" "It's already done, Petty Officer. We just need to remove yours and put his on you." "Alright, do it." "Follow me please." He took James to a lab where his armor was removed and Six's was put on in a matter of minutes. "Alright, Petty Officer, take a quick walk around the lab and join me at the energy shield testing station when you're ready." After all of the tests had been run, James was called back to the top floor for the team's next mission. (**The rest you already know, so I'll stop there.** ** FINALLY!**)

James was still a ways off from the Phoenix-Class cruiser when he received a clear transmission from it. "Mayday, mayday. This is Captain James Cutter of the UNSC _Spirit of Fire_, requesting assistance from any UNSC forces in the area." "_Spirit of Fire_, this is Spartan-005 on course to intercept. How's the ship doing?" "Spartan, we've been drifting through space for 20 years. The ship is a wreck: hull breaches galore, Slipspace drive thrown out the window and the reactor has failed. I'm using my personal communicator to talk to you, so any assistance is appreciated." "Alright, Captain. I need a place to land." "The docking bays are all open, Spartan. I'll transmit the layout of the ship so that you can come to the bridge." "Alrightâ€¦ shit. Captain, you've got a Covenant Corvette on an intercept course, starboard side. Looks like they're going to deploy boarding teams to take over the ship."

"Alright. Lieutenant Mathery! See if you can bring the reactors online at all, then ready the fireteams to defend against incoming boarders." "Yes, sir. Reactors can be pushed to 30%, no more, and even then, they'll have to be shut down in 15 minutes to prevent meltdown." "Then give me 30%." "Reactor is online, sir." "Mayday, mayday. This is Captain James Cutter of the UNSC _Spirit of Fire_ to all UNSC ships in the area. We have a Covenant Corvette approaching, and our MAC system and all Archer missile pods are disabled. We need

assistance now." "_Spirit of Fire_, this is the UNSC _Gettysburg_, we'll arrive in 2 minutes to assist, hang in there." "Much appreciated, _Gettysburg_."

James landed in one of the hangar bays and found three other Spartans waiting for him there. "Let's get to the bridge, James." "Lead the way, Douglas." The Spartans of Red Team took him to the bridge, where Captain Cutter was standing at a tactical overview of the ship with a marine and a civilian scientist. "Spartan, this is Sergeant John Forge, he'll be going with you to secure the ship." "Alright. When I was outside, the corvette was about 5000 kilometers off from the ship, so they'll probably be launching transports within about 15 minutes." "The _Gettysburg_ is also on station now, and they've deployed Longsword interceptors to take out some of the transports." "Sir, Covenant boarding craft have been launched! ETA is about a minute." "Scramble combat teams throughout the ship, Lieutenant. Ensign Havers, what's the status on the MAC and Archer systems?" "Archer pods 7-30 are destroyed, and all others but 1-6 are still offline. MAC system can only fire 2 rounds before critical shutdown is necessary, sir." "Remove safeties on Archer pods 1-6, and load a heavy round into the MAC system. Lieutenant Mathery, push the reactors to 50%, and divert all the power you can to charge the MAC system." "Yes, sir! Reactor at 50%, primary coolant will overheat in 5 minutes, sir." "Ensign Havers, get me a firing solution for the MAC, and fire when ready." "Yes, sir. Covenant boarding craft ETA 30 seconds." "Prepare firing solutions for the Archer pods to target those craft, Ensign." "Firing solution in 2 secondsâ€¦ acquired. Firing."

The ship barely rattled as 180 high explosive missiles burst out of the pods, then shook like a tall building in an earthquake as the MAC fired its 600 ton solid depleted uranium round. James was thrown to the floor along with Sergeant Forge. James sprang to his feet and helped Forge up. "Sergeant, I need a weapon." "So do I. Let's find an armory." "Captain, permission to leave the bridge?" "For what purpose, Petty Officer?" "Weapons check and final preparations to defend the ship against boarders, sir." "Granted. I'll be in touch to give you locations on the boarding craft." "Thank you, sir." James, Forge, and the three other Spartans left the bridge to find an armory.

"Petty Officer, it's Captain Cutter. Multiple boarding craft about to impact, estimated strength at 7 craft, with 3 platoons in each." "How many were shot down?" "More than double the number about to hit." "Didn't the shipboard AI take care of the point defense, sir?" "Our AI, Serina, degraded just 3 years after we went MIA. There _is_ no AI to mount point defense." "Ohâ€¦" A bang resounded throughout the ship. "They're latched on deck 3, near port hangar bay 5. Get down there _now_." "On it, sir." On the way, the group found an armory, and Forge took only an M90 Tactical Shotgun, while James took an M395 DMR and an MA5B Assault Rifle, and the Spartans of Red Team, Jerome, Alice, and Douglas, took a Spartan Laser, a Machine Gun Turret, and a Shotgun, respectively. They each also grabbed a full load of ammo and grenades, and left for port hangar 5.

Back on the Forerunner ship, the other four Spartans were trying to find a way to leave the ship _before_ it landed and without dying on hitting the ground if they jumped off. "We could jump off onto one of the Platforms, and then take a Pelican down." "Noâ€¦ too much risk of missing, Carter, and we don't have thruster packs like James to

correct our approach." "How about locking our armor on the way down and aiming for water?" "Jun, that's a terrible idea. First of all, we have no idea where we will descend, so we could land in the middle of a desert where there is no water. Second, there is a gigantic risk of death on impact since we don't have anything to cushion a fall from orbit. We may be crazy, but we're not ODSST crazy: we don't jump from orbit with just a thin skin of armor to protect us." "Sorry I put the idea out, John." "What about hijacking a Covenant ship and stealing a Phantom down to the surface?" "That's not a half bad idea, Jorge." "_Okay_, now you're just playing favorites, John." "His idea is genuinely good, Jun." "_Riiiiiiight._" "Okay, what if the Covenant detect us and vaporize us before we even get near the ship, and even if we get on, we would need to find the hangar bay. And also, I don't expect them to just let us in and take a Phantom from them." Their comms buzzed to life. "Hey guys, it's James. That Phoenix was the _Spirit of Fire_, and I found a couple more II's and a Pelican." "Wait, the ship _is secure_, right?" "Yeah, of course." "Okay. If we jump off the back of this ship, can you swing in and pick us up?" "Sure, John." "Okay, we'll jump and drop a beacon for you." "I'll wait for your signal, boss." John cut the link. "Let's go, Noble Team." "Okay, if we're going to reform the NOBLE, then I think I'm the CO." "Fine, Commander." "Well, what are you waiting for, Noble? Let's get going!" The unofficially reformed Team NOBLE, or at least the members that were on the ship, jumped off the back, and John dropped a beacon for James to find. A few minutes later, a Pelican flew up beside them and the back door dropped open. Four Spartans stood in the doorway. "Master Chief, sir!" "Good to see more Spartans alive and kicking." "Sorry we can't accompany you any farther than the surface, sir. We're needed elsewhere on Earth. "Understandable. Tell James that he's a crack pilot." "Actually, that's not James." The intercom buzzed to life. "Yeahâ€¦ name's Sergeant John Forge. UNSC marine." "Well, I'll be damned." "Let's get going. Where to, Master Chief?" "I'll be able to answer that one for you, Sergeant." "Who the hell are you?" "Name's Sergeant-Major Avery Junior Johnson. Just call me Johnson." "Okay. So where are you, exactly?" "Look behind you." The Spartans turned and found themselves staringâ€¦ at a Covenant Carrier.

19. Chapter 19

Chapter 19: Return of NOBLE

AN: Hello all, again! Shocker, right? **_Spirit of Fire**_**, Sergeant Forge, and James-005 all return in one chapter? Also, I apologize for the inconsistency in ch.18: Carter is not on the Forerunner ship with Jun, Jorge, John, and James (Man, that's a lot of J's) I changed it, but for all of you who read it on the first day it was published, I am sorry. On with the story! (Seriously? No one got the Gears of War reference in the last chapter? REALLY!? Augustus Cole? The Cole Train? The thrashball superstar? Nothing? COMMUNISTS, THE LOT OF YOU!)**_**Update:**_** I have a new story, The Sera Chronicles (The planet from Gears of War). The first couple of chapters are up for reading. Check it out. I think it's pretty good."**

Dear God in Heaven, what is that?!" "I think it's a Covenant Carrier, James." "I figured, John. But how did they get it? Did they steal it?" "Don't ask me, I don't know." "Actually, our new pal The Arbiter and his friend let us on for the journey back to Earth." "Wait, you

made nice with the Elites too?" "Yes, James, I thought we went over this back when you were on High Charity?" "We did, Carter. I just didn't believe you." "Do not call my species that _vile_ human name. We are Sangheili, and we are proud of it." "Who's that?" "That's the Arbiter's friend, Shipmaster R'tas Vadum." "Ohâ€¦ sorry." "It is trivial, Spartan." "Could we all just stop arguing, and put this Pelican in the ship?" "Of course, human. Opening hangar bay 7 now. _Shadow of Intent_, out."

On _Shadow of Intent'_sbridge, Carter, Emile, and Johnson stood back while the Arbiter, R'tas, and a few other Sangheili that the carrier picked up along the way controlled the ship. "Damn, look at 'em go." "This would go a lot faster if you three helped." "Okayâ€¦ what do you need us to do?" "Go down to the hangar bay and prepare one of those Pelicans of yours for departure." "We can do that." "Do not deviate from a very straight path to the hangar. Even though we now work together, I will not allow you to explore my ship." "That's fine, Shipmaster." The three humans left the bridge. "Arbiter, you appear discontented with something." "I am, Shipmaster. I understand that this is _your_ ship, but would it not have been better to send one of us with them? To ensure that they did not explore the ship and discover the Huragok onboard?" "I understand your concern, Arbiter, and I thought the same thing. There _is_ a Sangheili following them. He is using an Active Camouflage module to conceal his presence." "Alright."

Ravo E'tang stalked silently behind the three humans, making sure that they did not explore the ship and find the Huragok. His Camo module was working perfectly, and his helmet camera was transmitting directly to the Shipmaster. R'avo had been an Ossoona, or "Eye of the Prophet", before the Prophets turned the Covenant against them. After being rescued by the Shipmaster, Ravo had pledged his skills to _Shadow of Intent_, becoming akin to what humans called a "spy" for the Sangheili. The humans were still on course for the hangar, though they were moving at a relatively slow speed. If they did deviate and explore, Ravo knew he could not do much to stop them, since no Sangheili with as little combat experience as he did had ever killed a Demon on his own, let alone two and a "marine", so he just kept on walking and listened to their conversation.

"Do you guys get the feeling that we're being watched at all, or is it just me?" "There are probably cameras all throughout this ship, Emile. So yeah, I do think we're being watched." "All I want to know is: where the hell do they keep all the guns? I was looking for what seemed like hours for an armory and couldn't find a damn thing." "Maybe, Johnson, they just keep their weapons with them." "That would explain it." "Guys, we're here." Let's get that Pelican ready for dust-off." "Why not just use the one that James is flying in? It looks like it's just fine." "I don't know, Emile. Maybe they just wanted us off the bridge to talk about the hinge-head stock market or something." At this point, Sgt. Forge had already landed the other Pelican and was waiting for the others to board. "Hurry up! We ain't got all day, here!" "We're coming, but you better have a couple of guns onboard, because I need one!" "We'll get that all sorted out at Crow's Nest, Johnson."

The Pelican was about to take off when there was a knock on the bay hatch. Forge lowered it, and the Arbiter walked into the troop bay. "You didn't think to leave me here while the Prophets continue to hunt for a way to fire the rings, did you?" "We don't now. Let's go."

The hatch sealed and the bay pressurized. The Pelican flew out of the hangar and shot off towards Earth.

Crow's Nest. East Africa. Near ruins of New Mombasa.

The Pelican descended through the cloud layer and approached a surprisingly lush forest area, which was odd for East Africa. The trees split apart, revealing a landing pad. "Pelican 3-Charlie-Six to Crow's Nest, requesting permission to land. Authorization code Victor-3- Echo-Sierra 0117, over." "3-Charlie-Six, this is Crow's Nest, you are clear for docking in hangar bay 7: proceed north for 1½ kilometer, over." "Solid copy, Crow's Nest." The Pelican accelerated towards hangar bay 7. In the bay, John was holding Cortana's data chip in his hand. Johnson walked up beside him. "Where is she, Chief? Where's Cortana?" "She stayed behind." "We'll get her back when we finish with that damn Prophet." "I know."

The Pelican touched down in the hangar bay, and when the boarding ramp lowered, the team saw a handful of marines standing around the dropship. "Look at that! SPARTANS!" "No way, you better not be shittin' me!" "No, for real. Honest-to-God SPARTANS. Nine of 'em." "NINE?" "Alright, people, get a move on. Sorry about that. Not many marines get to see one SPARTAN in their lifetime, let alone nine. Chief, good to see you and your team again." "Likewise, ma'am." "Come on: let's get you up to speed." Commander Miranda Keyes led the team to the command center, briefing them as they went. "The Prophet of Truth could have hit anywhere, but he chose here, East Africa, the ruins of New Mombasa." "Why?" "That's what we're trying to figure out, Commander."

The command center was massive in size, with three large screens mounted on the far wall. "Get me a direct link to Lord Hood." "On it, ma'am. Uhâ€¦ ma'am? Incoming transmission from FLEETCOM atâ€¦ Reach?" "Patch it through." "Yes, Ma'am." "~~~ to Sierra-259, this is a priority one transmission. Sierra-259, if you are receiving, please acknowledge. This is NOBLE Actual." "Holland? Corporal, is this channel secure?" "Can't really guarantee secure on an open channel, Commander." "Could the Covenant trace it to us?" "I could." NOBLE Team whirled on their heels to the source of the voice. "Kat?" "Commander." "Butâ€¦ you died on Reachâ€¦" "Long story, Commander. Short version: prototype Hardlight Hologram. ONI wanted it tested and gave me one. Saw that Phantom coming in and decided to test it." "But James was able to use the Magnum on its belt." "That was real." "Damnâ€¦ You could have told us." "ONI wanted it kept secret, to have a real reaction to its 'death'." "But it talked to us." "Thatâ€¦ I don't know why." "Can you get this channel secure?" "I can try." Kat walked over and took the Corporal's seat. She punched in a few codes, and then handed a transceiver to Carter. "Best make it quick, Commander. I tried my best, but I can't guarantee they won't intercept it." "Okay." Carter took the transceiver and held it to his ear. "Carter hereâ€¦ Sirâ€¦ Yes, sirâ€¦ Sadly, yesâ€¦ Noâ€¦ We can do that, sir. Carter out." "So, what did he want?" "We're being redirected to the town of Voi to run a counterassault. Covenant all but smashed the marine contingent there." "Voi? Where is that, anyway?" "According to Holland, about 30 miles northwest." "Noble Team, Good to see all of you in one piece." NOBLE turned on their heels and saluted Lord Hood. "Commander, what's your team's status?" "Green, sir. But we've been redirected by Colonel Holland to the town of Voi to run a counterassault, sir." "I guess that just leaves the Master Chief and Red team here, then." "Negative, sir. Red Team is

being deployed elsewhere." "Well then, Commander Keyes, you better have a damn good plan." "I do, sir. Truth's ships are concentrated around the excavation site. A ground assault could neutralize any AA's that the Covenant has around it, and then the fleet could destroy Truth's ships." "There are a hell of a lot of 'maybes' in that plan, Commander. I only have a handful of ships, and I don't want to risk them. Arbiter, is the _Shadow of Intent_ still in orbit?" "Yes, but it cannot take down all of Truth's ships alone." "That's what I needed to know, Arbiter. I'll get what ships I can, and we'll await the signal t  |"

The lights went out, and all power ceased in the base. "God damnit, not again!" "Emergency generators, now!" "Yes, ma'am." "As soon as we're back up, reestablish contact with~" The central viewscreen flashed to life. "You are, all of you, vermin: cowering in the dirt, thinking  | what, I wonder? That you might escape the coming fire? No. Your world will burn until its surface is but _glass_, and not even your demons will be able to come crawling, blackened from their holes to witness our passage. For your destruction is the will of the Gods. And I  | I _am_ their instrument."

"Cocky bastard. Just loves to run his mouth, don't he?" "Johnson, coordinate an evac of the base." "Ma'am?" "We're about to get hit." "Yes, ma'am." "Spartans, I need you on defense. NOBLE, secure the hangar, make sure nothing enters, and get the Pelicans out in one piece. Red Team, you're the QRF. Any calls for assistance come in, you're going. Master Chief, you're with Red Team." "Yes, ma'am." "Follow me. I'll show you the armory." "Lead the way, Sergeant."

****The Battle for Crow's Nest begins! Nest time on **_**Spartans Never Die.**_**

20. Chapter 20

Chapter 20: Flight of the Spartans

****Author's Notes:** I feel like an asshole right now. I can't believe that I almost cancelled the story! I came [holds index finger and thumb about 1 inch apart] this close to submitting the chapter with the note that I was cancelling the story! Then I smacked myself in the head "YOU DUMBASS! THESE PEOPLE LOVE YOUR BOOK! YOU CAN'T QUIT NOW!" So, anyway, on with the almost-cancelled story!**

NOBLE Team followed Sergeant Johnson below the ops center to a lightly stocked armory. "We couldn't get ahold of much, but what we did get we have a lot of scattered throughout the base." "Grab what you need, NOBLE. Remember: we leave on the last Pelican out of the hangar." Everyone took their preferred weapons: Carter: a DMR and Magnum. Kat: an AR and Magnum. Jun: a Sniper Rifle and DMR. Emile: a Shotgun and Grenade Launcher. Jorge ripped a machine gun off of the nearby stand and grabbed a pair of Battle Rifles. James, now Noble Six, again, took an AR and a DMR. "Let's get to that hangar."

NOBLE Team left the ops center and entered a corridor filled with Covenant, all focused on a Warthog facing NOBLE. "Light those bastards up!" NOBLE opened fire, killing half of the Grunts before taking cover as a barrage of plasma and pink needles flew at them. "How do we get out of this one?" "Like this, James." Emile primed two

frag grenades and tossed them into the air. They landed in the middle of the Covenant squad and detonated, killing the rest of the Grunts, 5 Jackals, and 3 Brutes. James jumped into the chaos, killing 3 Brutes, and 2 Jackals before his shields collapsed. The rest of the team took pot shots at the survivors, killing them off before they could even ground James.

"Damn. Reminds me of a combat sim I ran as a trainee on Reach, although the Brutes and Jackals were Elites, and there were about 13 of them." "Did you kill them all?" "Yep." "Shit, Emile. Did you use a gun at all?" "Nope. Just this." He pulled his kukri out of its sheath on his right shoulder. "He did. I watched him do it. I also killed the last one as it stabbed him through the chest with an Energy Sword." "Jun, he never stabbed me." "The computer doesn't lie, Emile. It killed you, fair and square." "Alright, you two. Let's get a move on."

The Hangar was a pure firefight: marines desperately holding the line against numerous Brutes, Jackals, and Grunts, Phantom dropships with more Covenant piling out by the minute, and now NOBLE entered the fray, gunning down 3 Brutes and 5 Grunts before the Phantom's heavy plasma turret opened fire, pinning the team behind support struts in the hangar. Emile loaded a grenade into his launcher and fired at the turret, using the secondary EMP to disable the turret. The Phantoms fled the hangar, probably to make room for more, and NOBLE emerged from cover and obliterated the remaining Covenant.

The last Pelican dropship was lowered from the ceiling and the bay door dropped. "Everyone in! Next stop, Voi." NOBLE Team and the few remaining marines in the hangar boarded the dropship, which promptly took off at full burn to the abandoned town of Voi. (**Their battle is next chapter)**

In the command center, the Master Chief and Red Team were helping Johnson prepare a bomb that would destroy the base. "We've linked it to smaller charges throughout the base. Nice little going-away present for the Covenant." "Brutes have taken the barracks, marines are trapped inside. They do not treat prisoners well." Johnson led Red Team to the exit of the ops center. "Get to the barracks, find those men." John took point and led Red Team down a small corridor and into a maintenance bay occupied by 6 Brutes, a Chieftain among them. "A fresh scent. Must be close." The Brute's heads darted around as a high pitched whine filled the room. The Chieftain never notice the laser pointed at its chest until Jerome's Spartan Laser discharged, tearing through the Chieftain and the Captain behind him. "Weapons free!" The Chief unloaded a shell from his new shotgun into the gut of one Brute while he beheaded another with his knife. A blaze of machine gun fire, another Spartan Laser shot, and two rockets later, the Brutes were a bloody mess on the floor.

They exited the room and entered the cave system that linked parts of the base. They heard plasma fire up ahead. "You do yourselves no service serving the Prophets! Repeal your ways! Or all your hives shall burn!" When they reached the Arbiter, he had killed all of the Drones. "The barracks is near, Spartans. We must hurry." They opened the door to the barracks and a marine was thrown into a nearby pillar. There was a group of Brutes up ahead, mercilessly torturing a marine, obviously fresh out of boot camp. "NO! PLEASE!" "Look. It has soiled itself." Jerome shouldered his Spartan Laser, but the Chief pulled it down. "You'll kill the marine, too. Let me." The Chief

sprinted forward and blasted a hole through the Brute Captain's heart with his shotgun. Its shields took the brunt of the impact, but a few pellets pierced its heart, killing it without making an exit wound. The marine dropped to the floor, picked up a M6H Magnum that he had probably dropped, and put four rounds into the nearest Brute's head. He then pulled his combat knife and drove it into another Brute's neck. "That's for Alistair." "Damn, he's good." "Yeah. When they start making SPARTAN-IV's, he's getting the first seat that isn't reserved for a II or a III. Hey, kid! What's your name?" "Corporal James Rodriguez, but my friends call me 'Alcatraz' because I'm great at making traps." (**James Rodriguez is his real name. Look it up.)**

The Arbiter had ignored the conversation, instead focusing on the Brutes that were converging on their position. "More Brutes!" Rodriguez stole a grenade from Jerome, primed it, counted to two, and threw it. It blew up as it rolled into the center of the Brutes, killing all three. Two more marines joined the group as they finished off the Brutes. "Alistair?! I thought you were dead for sure!" "When have I ever been that easy to kill?" "When we fought Brutes." "Good point." There was a huge gash across one of the marine's chests. "You gonna be okay? That's quite the gash." "I've dealt with worse." "Like what, Sarge?" "Classified." "Bullshit." Sergeant Daniel Alistair glared at the Corporal. "That's 'bullshit, SIR' to you." "Let's get going to the evac point."

The evac point was just ahead when a pack of Brutes with jetpacks ambushed the group. "OH, COME ON! LEAVE US ALONE!" "Quit bitching, private, and start shooting!" Jerome reached for a frag and came up empty. "God damnit! Chief! Toss a frag!" The Master Chief grabbed a grenade off of his belt, pulled the pin, counted to 1½, and threw. The grenade exploded behind the Brutes, throwing shrapnel into three of the Brute's jetpacks, venting the fuel inside, and sending the Brutes smashing into nearby walls. The rest were cut down by a hail of machine gun fire from Alice-130. Sgt. Johnson joined them as a Pelican descended. "Brutesâ€| ambushed the ops centerâ€| couldn't hold 'em off. They deactivated the bomb." "We'll go back and reactivate the bomb." "Good luck, Spartans." Johnson jumped on the Pelican as it ascended, and Rodriguez helped him in as the hatch closed.

"This is Sergeant Daniel Alistair to all UNSC personnel still in Crow's Nest. The last remaining exit is a garage underneath the hangar. Good luck." "Alright, Spartans. Let's get back to the ops center and arm that bomb. The last of the Spartan II's, minus Jorge-052 and James-005, turned and walked off toward the ops center.

21. Chapter 21

Chapter 21: Voi

**Author's Notes: 21 chapters, Six months, 30-some odd followers and favorites, and a HELL of a big cast of characters. DAMN! This has become my lifeblood. I get home from school and can't wait to start writing again! I must say, my grades have improved so much since beginning this book because this book (And your attention to it) inspires me. Thank you to all who favorited, followed, reviewed, or just sat down for a few minutes to read. It means a lot to me. (That

says a lot, coming from a sophomore in high school.)**

File: (REDACTED) Date: (REDACTED)

USER: Classified [Level (REDACTED) and above]

ENTRY: 12-041/029

CLEARANCE: Classified [Level (REDACTED) and above]

SUBJECT: Review of secure transmission made from SPARTAN III Commander A-259 (NOBLE 1) onboard Covenant Separatist ship _Shadow of Intent_ to Colonel Urban Holland (NOBLE Actual) at ONI CASTLE Base on Reach.

(Transmission intercepted by communications satellites in the Oort Cloud while waiting for further instructions concerning classified project_. Transmission was recorded and sent to ONI officials on ONIRF Trevelyan/Onyx shield world.)

~Begin Transcript~

NOBLE ACTUAL: Commander, I hope that the assault on Voi was successful?

NOBLE 1: It was, sir. We surprised them. Pushed them back to the city limits before more reinforcements arrived. Someone must have squawked during the fighting.

NA: Do you think this complicated the mission Commander Keyes gave you?

N1: Sir?

NA: Don't BS me, Commander. Keyes filled me in on the mission before I contacted you. That's why I gave you the mission.

N1: Sir, I was unaware. But yes, I do think it did complicate the mission that the other Spartans carried out.

NA: Other Spartans?

N1: Yes, sir. We've been working with a SPARTAN-II since the start of the Covenant's siege on Earth, SPARTAN (REDACTED). Just before we descended to (REDACTED), we met a trio of SPARTAN-II's from the _Spirit of Fire_.

NA: How long were you in Voi?

N1: About a day, sir.

NA: Any KIA's or WIA's?

N1: NOBLE 2 suffered a minor injury when a fragmentation grenade she threw was hit in midair by a Carbine round, throwing shrapnel into her left leg, and the surviving marines were executed as we landed.

NA: She?

N1: Yes, sir. (REDACTED) apparently survived Reach by using a prototype ONI hologram made of hard light.

NA: Damnâ€¦| So that meansâ€¦|

N1: Yes, sir. The only KIA on Reach was (REDACTED).

NA: What's the status of NOBLE?

N1: We've joined the Elites and the rest of the Spartans on the _Shadow of Intent_ and are planning our next move. We've followed the Prophet of Truth and his fleet through a portal that was opened on Earth by a mysterious Forerunner ship. Now, we've found what a Forerunner AI, 343 Guilty Spark, calls the Ark, where all the Halo rings can be fired remotely.

NA: I've seen the report from (REDACTED) about the incidents on Installation 04. From what I understand, the rings will wipe out all life in the galaxy to prevent the Flood from spreading.

N1: Exactly, sir. (REDACTED) found a recording from the former UNSC (REDACTED)'s AI, (REDACTED), inside a Covenant ship infested with the Flood that crashed on Earth.

NA: You're sure about that?

N1: Yes, sir. But the ship was destroyed, along with half of the continent, when the _Shadow of Intent_ glassed it.

NA: So Earth's safe?

N1: For now, sir. The Covenant have left Earth's orbit and have abandoned any ground forces left.

NA: That's not how the Covenant usually acts.

N1: We've seen it before. Remember Sigma Octanus 4?

NA: Right. Commander, good luck on your mission. I'll be in touch soon. Holland out.

~END TRANSMISSION~

22. Chapter 22

Chapter 22: Flood Watch

AN's I know the last chapter went kind of out of order, but I'm going to focus this chapter around the level Floodgate and just before The Ark. I may include another chapter formatted like 21. I just found that style of writing interesting and wanted to see if it was well-liked.

On the bridge of the _Shadow of Intent_, the Master Chief, along with the rest of the surviving Spartans and the Arbiter, Lord Hood, Shipmaster R'tas Vadum, and Sergeants Johnson and Forge, stood in earnest as an old enemy of the Chief's, 343 Guilty Spark, the Monitor of Installation 04, where the Chief had gone just after the Fall of Reach, tried to repair a message from Cortana that the Chief had

found on a Flood-infested ship that crashed near New Mombasa. The Chief lapsed into a flashback to the events.

The AA gun's underbelly opened, revealing the central power core. He threw a plasma grenade into the exposed core and ran, narrowly avoiding the collapsing debris. He picked himself up and put his MA5C Assault Rifle on his back, and then turned to the Forerunner ship that he had come back to Earth on after leaving High Charity. An energy surge opened a portal above the ship which sucked the Covenant ships into its gaping hole, then stabilized and fell silent. He turned at what sounded like a ship exiting Slipspace and saw a Covenant ship with a familiar green aura about it fly overhead and crash nearby. His companion, The Arbiter, turned to him, confused. "What is it? More Brutes?" "Worse." The Flood had found Earth and were beginning their infection of the planet here in East Africa.

_ "The Flood. We can't let them spread any further. Chief, find that ship, destroy it." "Yes, ma'am." He and the Arbiter hurried to the ship, passing through a marine barracks that had been entirely infected, and a warehouse filled with new forms of Flood, most likely Brutes from the ship._

_ They were almost to the ship. Just a few hundred more meters. A drop pod crashed down in front of them "This is the carrier Shadow of Intent. Clear this area. We will handle the Flood." More drop pods, containing more Elites, crashed down and began to engage the Flood. He ran ahead, leaving the Arbiter and the Elites to fight the Flood._

_ The inside of the ship was infested. There were massive Flood growths all over the inner hull, and all manner of Flood forms that all sought his spinal cord. _**(For those of you who don't know, the Flood infects its victims by tapping their spinal cord, causing a rapid alteration of the victim's DNA. The process is obviously imperfect, as the alterations take more time than any sane person (or alien) wants to give them. [For a more complete explanation, refer to Halo Nation or the Halo novel, The Flood.]** _He found a small room with what looked like a holo tank; similar to the one's used to house AI's on ships. As he approached, Cortana's avatar appeared on the pedestal. "Chief!" "Cortana!" "The Gravemind. He's inside my systems. He knows everything. But he doesn't know about the portal! What's on the other side!" The image faded for a moment before reappearing and repeating itself. He reached down and pulled out the data chip inside, then left and ran straight into 343 Guilty Spark. "Reclaimer!" He instinctively pulled his MA5C off of his back and aimed it at Spark. "Why do you show such hostility, Reclaimer?" "On Halo, you tried to kill Cortana, you tried to kill me." "Yes, I was only following protocol. But now that the Installation is destroyed, my only task is to _help_ you, Reclaimer." "Spartan, we must leave, now." _

"What we did was justified." "How do you justify glassing half a continent?" "The Flood." "We could have handled it differently. I'm starting to wonder just how much help your kind will be." "A single Flood spore can destroy a species." "So can a beam of charged plasma." The Chief snapped out of his flashback and refocused, catching the tail end of the conversation. James was staring at him. "You okay, John? You've been looking at that same spot for the last 10 minutes." "I'm fine." The two Sergeants were conversing on their own. "I don't see why they don't just nuke it." "I don't know about

you, but I've seen them come back basically from the dead just now." "What?" "The reason _Spirit of Fire_ took so long getting back to UNSC space is because we detonated our FTL drive to destroy a Forerunner world that was filled with these bastards." The rest were focused on the heated debate between Lord Hood and R'tas Vadum.

343 jumped back as he finished repairing the message. "Reclaimer, your construct is heavily damaged. I have done as much as I can, but it is irreversibly damaged." The recording started. "Chief! The Gravemind, he's in my systems. He knows everything. But he doesn't know about the portal! What's on the other side! It can wipe out the Flood once and for all!" The recording faded and didn't reappear. "So what do we do now?" "Now we go stop Truth." "What about the Flood?" "Right now, that Prophet is a bigger threat than anything. And besides, did you see Cortana's condition? She could be rampant, leading us into a trap set by the Gravemind." "With respect, Admiral, they are both equally present threats." "I understand that, but the Covenant are closer to their goals than the Flood."

Carter walked back in after delivering a report of NOBLE's assault on Voi. "What's going on?" "We're planning our assault on the Ark." "We'll need to find a Cartographer so that we can find the control room. And Truth." "I'll split my team into two squads. Kat, Jun: we're NOBLE Recon. Emile, Jorge, Six, you're with the Master Chief as NOBLE Strike." "Sounds like a plan, Commander. Now we just need a place to deploy more concentrated ground forces. NOBLE Recon will find an LZ, and then NOBLE Strike can clear it out. The _Forward Unto Dawn_ can then deploy more forces and we'll assault through to the Cartographer." Let's get ready, NOBLE."

The Spartans, minus Red Team, who had been deployed to act as a second recon team, left for the hangar bay. They flew over to the _Dawn_, where they resupplied and rearmed, then loaded into two Pelicans and departed for the surface of the Ark.

23. Chapter 23

Chapter 23: The Ark-Part 1

****AN's:** Now we begin the Battle of Installation 00 (The Ark). I'm splitting this into two parts to cover both NOBLE Strike and Recon's perspectives, in that order. This part will follow the first part of the level "The Ark" very closely, but part two will be almost entirely original, following Carter, Kat, and Jun's journey to find the Cartographer. On a side note, does anyone know how to make your character in Reach look like a SPARTAN-II in MJOLNIR MK. 5 (A) PAA? I just bought the helmet (God, that took a while!) and wanted to know. OH SHIT! I just realized: I never gave a description of Six/James armor, so here it is. Helmet: Pilot (CNM), Left Shoulder: CQC, Right Shoulder: ODST, Chest: HP/ Parafoil, Wrist: UA/Buckler, Utility: Tactical/Hard Case, Visor Color: Silver, Knee Guards: FJ/Para. Sorry about that. Next chapter I'll reveal a little more about what's going to happen after the destruction of Installation 04B. Last but not least, check out my profile, I have some story ideas I've been thinking of, and I'd like to see what you think of them, and which ones I should start on.**

The back hatch of the Pelican dropship opened as the craft neared the drop zone. The Master Chief, Emile, Jorge, and James, flanked by 4

ODST's specializing in covert insertions, jumped out of the back. "Whoa. Guys, look in the sky. Is that what I think it is?" "Yep. We're outside the galaxy now." "Think about this: We're the first humans to set foot outside of the Milky Way galaxy. That's big." "Yeah, we get it, James. It's a big deal. But we have more important things to do right now, like saving that galaxy from a megalomaniacal Prophet who wants to exterminate all life. Now let's go."

The team climbed up a sheer cliff face to get a good view on the nearby Covenant Loyalist outpost. The ODST's had climbed up as the Spartans discussed their location in the universe, and now they followed. "Got a good angle here. You get first shot, Chief." John put his AR on his back and loaded a clip into his SR99C-S2-AM Sniper Rifle. He set the crosshairs of the scope on a Brute Captain's mouth and fired. The 12.5X114mm Armor piercing round tore through the Captain's mouth and severed its spinal cord, killing it and the two Grunts that happened to be walking behind it at that moment. Then, all hell broke loose: Jorge, who had abandoned his preferred HMG in favor of dual-wielding an MA5C AR and a BR55 Battle Rifle, and Emile jumped down off the cliff to engage the aliens in a more gruesome fashion, while John, James and the ODST's stayed on the cliff ledge, taking pot shots at the aliens that Jorge and Emile missed or didn't get to fast enough.

A minute later, all the Brutes and Grunts were dead, and Emile was finishing off the last Jackal sniper. "Will you just kill it already? You've been slicing its arms and legs for the last 5 minutes." "You denied me this the last time, and I'm gonna make this thing suffer." "Fine. Catch up with us when you're done, okay?" Emile had already gone back to torturing the poor Jackal, so the rest of the team left to find an LZ for Commander Keyes. "You think that was smart?" "His problem." "Carter's gonna be pissed." "Emile's done this a few times, which is why he isn't allowed to run counter-insurgency ops anymore; made the Spartans look bad." "Wait, then why did he go to Visegrad Relay on Reach if you were expecting Innies?" "Don't ask me. I don't know. Waitâ€¦ how do you know about Visegrad?" "ONI never erased Six's video files, so I looked through them when we weren't doing anything else." "Those missions were classified top secret, James." "I know." "Then why did you look at them?" "I don't know. Wanted to see where ONI had sent you guys before I met Six in space."

Emile caught up a few minutes later, as the group neared the crash site of a Pelican dropship. "We spotted a good LZ before we went down. If we can get to our vehicles, we'll show you." There were 5 Brutes and 4 Jackals surrounding the crash site, with a pair of flipped Mongoose ATV's behind them. "Here's the plan: Emile and Jorge, hang back until me and James start firing so that we don't give away our position early. Troopers, see if you can sneak around behind them and then wait for my signal." The ODST's lay down in the sand and crawled off to get behind the Brutes and Jackals, while Emile, Jorge, and the two surviving marines crept back behind a pair of large rocks. "_We're in position, Chief._" "Rogerâ€¦ go." The ODST's jumped up and sprayed the Covenant bastards with lead from M7S SMG's and MA5C Assault Rifles, while James and the Chief opened up with DMR and Sniper Rifle fire. "WEAPONS FREE!" Emile and Jorge jumped into the fray as well, mauling down 2 Brutes before they even knew that there were Demons attacking them.

In the span of 20 seconds, all of the Jackals were dead, and Emile blew the head off of the last Brute. "What theâ€¦" "Relax, he don't

mean nothing. He's in his element right now." "Which isâ€|?" "Those times where I get to show you jar-heads how to run a CQC op." "Sometimes, I think he should have led a CQC squad." "He probably was going to, until he was pulled from Alpha Company and assigned to NOBLE." "Damn right, I was. But I don't mind being transferred." John and James grabbed a Mongoose, while Emile took another and an ODST joined him. Jorge jumped in the driver's seat of a Spectre LRV and the three other ODST's joined him. "Let's roll!" The team took off towards the crash site of a Longsword interceptor, but found nothing but Brutes and Grunts and the hull of the fighter. "Damn!" The Chief took off towards a nearby cave, and found the LZ that the now deceased marines had told him of.

There were two AA Wraith tanks shooting at a midair battle between UNSC Hornets and Covenant Banshees, while a pack of Brutes and a regular Wraith guarded them. John gunned the Mongoose towards the Wraith while James readied a rocket launched he had found at the Pelican crash site. He emptied both tubes, destroying the Wraith before it knew he had fired. James jumped off the back and sprinted to the first AA Wraith, jumped on the back, and slammed a plasma grenade into the core, he then jumped off before it went off and was on the second AA Wraith before the grenade detonated. The second followed the first, and soon, the area was clear for the Dawn to enter. "Uhâ€| Guys? Is the Dawn rated for orbit?" "I guess we'll find out, Corporal. Here she comes!" The UNSC Forward Unto Dawn streaked over the horizon and came to a stop over the LZ. "Thanks, Spartans. I don't know if the Dawn would have lasted much longer up there. Come to the back of the frigate." A platform slowly came down from the ship, containing three Scorpion Tanks and two Gauss Warthogs. "NOBLE Strike, this is NOBLE Recon." "NOBLE Strike. Go ahead, Carter." "We've found a structure that matches Cortana's description of the Cartographer on the first Halo. But the door's locked." "That is not a problem, Reclaimer. I would be pleased to open it for you." "That's great. Get here soon, Chief. Recon out."

24. Chapter 24

Chapter 24: The Ark-Part 2

****AN's:** Part 2 of The Ark! This chapter will focus on NOBLE Recon's journey to find the Cartographer, and the end of the level, "The Ark". Now to those notes about the post Halo 3 chapters: I will not go straight to Halo 4; instead, I will take a few chapters to chronicle the SPARTAN-IV's missions aboard the UNSC ****_**Infinity**_**** prior to, during, and after finding Installation 03 and the Composer and the coordinates for Requiem, and also a chapter or two for a brief look back at what has happened in the book, and during the Chief's untold adventures on Installation 4 (Halo:CE), mostly from Cortana's perspective, but maybe from the Chief's. Spartan Ops will not be included, as it has absolutely nothing to do with any of the major characters in the book, or so I have read online, but I may hint at it in the final chapters of the book. I will also not include Halo for Xbox One, as it will probably not be out when I finish and I will not be purchasing it or an Xbox One until 2015, when the new Star Wars: Battlefront and the real Halo 5 come out (It seems useless to postpone the book for a whole year!) Also, I will go a bit more in depth with my origins of the characters that are on the aft section of the ****_**Dawn**_****, but that will be

in the actual H4 timeline. Tell me what books from my profile you want to see after (or even while) I finish this one, though I'll probably start Last of the Spartans before too long. Or War of the Worlds. Can you guys believe it? Six months ago to the day, this was just an idea that I started writing in the back of my dad's Chevy Avalanche, and now it's a pretty successful book.**

Pelican Dropship Bravo-029 en route to surface of Ark. 10 minutes after NOBLE Strike's descent

Carter, Kat, and Jun stood up as the bay door dropped open and the Pelican landed at the LZ. "We couldn't get any closer?" "We don't even know if this is what we're looking for, so no." The three stepped off and the Pelican returned to the _Dawn_. "Jun, take the high ground. You spot anything, let us know." "On it, sir." Jun climbed a nearby cliff face and shouldered his SR99C-S2-AM Sniper Rifle. "_All clear, Commander_." "Roger, Three."

Carter and Kat stuck to cover, unwilling to take the risk of a straight path. "Do you think they can find an LZ for the frigate?" "I trust them to do their job. They're Spartans, Kat, they'll get it done." "_Hold up. Covie patrol dead ahead._" Carter peered up over the rock he had taken cover behind. "I see 'em." "_Permission to engage, sir?_" "Negative. Wait for them to pass." "_Waitâ€¦ They're turning aroundâ€¦ One of the Brutes is shouting at the other. Let me amplify it._" "~swear I heard something." "Probably the wind." "No, it was different, like a human dropship." "There are no humans here. They landed tens of miles away. Let's get back." "Did you get that, Commander?" "_I heard Jun. Let's follow them. Maybe they'll take us to the Cartographer._" "Or straight into a Covenant Base." "We'll pull back if that happens. Let's go." Jun set off across the cliff to recon where the patrol went, while Carter and Kat followed from a distance. "_Commander, there's a checkpoint up ahead. Definitely a base._" "Copy, Jun. Fall back. We'll flank around it." "Roger."

The three turned due west, and avoided the checkpoint. The west side was unguarded, so Carter and Kat slipped through there. "Now's the time to use those Active Camo generators the Elites gave us." "Definitely." Carter keyed the icon in the lower left-hand corner of his HUD, and faded from view. He looked to his left, and saw Kat disappear as well. The system was not perfect, however: the modules were outdated, and while they lasted forever, rapid or sudden movement overtaxed the system, making the pair visible again, and forcing them to crouch-walk to avoid this problem. Comms also didn't work while the module was in use, but Carter suspected that that was a modification specific to the pair that he and Kat had received. Carter could still tell where Kat was, due to the waypoint on his HUD. He slowly approached a lone Brute and drew his knife. He quickly checked that there was no one else around that would see the kill, and promptly slit its throat. It died noiselessly, and Carter dragged the body behind a nearby rock. _When they find it, we'll be long gone._ He saw a shimmer in the air next to him, but there was no waypoint attached to it. _DAMN! BRUTE!_ He quickly stabbed where he thought its neck was, but instead stabbed its eye. The Brute Stalker let out a deafening howl, which was quickly silenced by Kat stabbing its throat and covering its mouth.

Carter decloaked. "Jun, we've been compromised." "_I heard. I also have eyes on a structure that matches Cortana's description of the map room on the first Halo._" "Good." "We're coming to you, Jun."

"_Affirmative, sir._" Kat decloaked, and the pair sprinted to the cliff where Jun was waiting. "Nice of you to show up, Commander. Take a look." Jun handed his Sniper Rifle to Carter, who aimed the scope where Jun was pointing. "That is it. Let's get down there." "Copy that." Jun led the way down the cliff to the entrance to the Cartographer. "Kat, try and get the door open." "On it." Kat approached the door, looking for any kind of device that would open the door. "There's no mechanism to open it, and it looks pretty thick. The only way we're getting in now is aboutâ€¦ 2 kilos of high explosives." "And we don't have that, nor do we have the time to set it up. NOBLE Strike, this is NOBLE Recon." "_NOBLE Strike. Go ahead Carter._" "We've found a structure that matches Cortana's description of the Cartographer from the first Halo, but the door is locked." "_That is not a problem, Reclaimer. I would be pleased to open it for you._" "That's great. Get here soon, Chief. Recon out." "So what now, Commander?" "Now we wait for them." "That really the best option, Commander?" "It's the only option, Jun."

NOBLE Recon hid for a full ten minutes before hearing the roar of engines and the shouts of UNSC troopers. "_All armor, form up on the lower doorway. Chief, head up there and have your robot friend pick the lock." "I beg your pardon? I am 343 Guilty Spark, Monitor of Installation 04, and a highly advanced~" "Yeah, well you're also out ticket to the Cartographer._" A loud _BANG!_ resounded on Carter's left side and a tank round hit about 30 meters from him. "WATCH YOUR FIRE! FRIENDLIES HERE!" "_Sorry Carter._" "_Remind me again which genius let James drive the tank?_" "_You did, Emile._" "_Ohâ€¦_" "_All Tangos neutralized. Let's get that door open._"

"Hmâ€¦ The Defilers seem to have triggered the security system." "Great. Let's go find the controls." "Unnecessary, Reclaimer. One moment, please." 343 shot a beam at the door, and seconds later, it opened. "This way, Reclaimers." The Spartans followed Spark into the structure. "This panel will activate a bridge below." "Hey, what's this?" James was examining a yellow orb behind the bridge controls. "Leave it, James. It's probably not that important." "If you say so."

343 Guilty Spark led the Spartans through a winding series of passages that led out to a large canyon. "Waitâ€¦ Wasn't that supposed to be the map room?" "Don't be ridiculous, Reclaimer; The Cartographer is this way." A Scarab thundered over them and headed to where the Monitor was indicating and over a large wall. "That's just perfect." "At least it didn't see us." "It will." "Yeah, well we have an anti-Scarab weapon." Jorge was pointing to the lower doorway which the vehicles had gone through. Two Scorpion tanks and two Gauss Warthogs drove out and immediately engaged nearby Brute Choppers and Ghosts.

Another Gauss 'Hog pulled up beside the team and a marine jumped out of the driver's seat. "I'll catch a ride with the tanks." "James, Emile, and Jun: take the 'Hog. The rest of us will grab a tank and catch up." Carter, Kat, John and Jorge sprinted off to the nearest tank. John drove while Carter manned the turret and Kat and Jorge rode on the jumpseats on the tread covers. John peeled out as fast as the tank would go, firing at the inbound Ghosts and Choppers as he went. As he destroyed the first of the Wraith tanks between the Spartans and the Cartographer, and very familiar whine was heard, and a green laser streaked down from the wall. "Scarab's back! Looks like it means business this time." "_All armor, form up! I want everyone

supportin' the Spartans; they're gonna take it down!_" "_Chief, get around behind it! We'll distract it for you!_" "Will do, James." The Gauss 'Hog streaked by and opened fire on the legs of the Scarab. The Chief steered the tank around behind the Scarab. "James, we're in position." "_Hit the power core, now!_" John hit the button, and the 90mm HV Tungsten shell streaked into the gut of the Scarab. The round hit the power core and destabilized it, causing a wild-cat explosion a mere ten seconds later. "_DAMN FINE SHOOTING!" "Good work, Spartans. I saw that explosion from orbit." "Shipmaster, area is clear. Chief, get to the top of that spire and link up with the Arbiter and the Elites._"

The Master Chief drove the tank near the spire and obliterated the Brutes, Jackals and Grunts guarding the spire. "Let's go." The Spartans jumped out of their vehicles as a green Phantom dropship landed near the entrance. "Nice of you to show up _after_ all the hostiles are dead." "There are certain to be more inside, Spartan." The Arbiter and Carter took point and led the joint Spartan-Elite force into the structure. The door to the lower level was locked. "Jorge." "On it." Jorge put his AR and BR on his back and took a few steps back from the door. He charged and slammed his 3/4-ton body into the door, which fell with ease. "Clear!" The Spartans moved in first, followed by the Arbiter and the Elites.

The team made their way down to the lowest level, killing many Brutes, Grunts, and Jackals along the way. "In here, Reclaimers, is the Cartographer." The door opened to a crescent-moon shaped platform overlooking a vast sea in the middle of a desert. The Chief followed the Monitor to a console, which he activated. A very familiar spiral of gas appeared as a hologram. "That's our galaxy. We're beyond the rim." "Three radii from galactic center, to be precise. Ohê€|" "What?" "The Defiler has activated the security measures, and erected an impassable shield. A failsafe, in case the Flood ever found the Ark." "Shit! Banshees!" The Spartans and the Arbiter hid behind the small columns encircling the platform, but the Monitor stayed where he was. "Spark! Get down!" The Monitor joined the Chief where he was hiding as a purple Phantom dropship flew in and hovered just above the platform. "_Chief, Johnson has a Pelican waiting. He'll pick you up one level down. Hurry!_"

The Spartans and the Arbiter ran to the door out of the map room and to the stairway down. "Keep an eye out for more Brutes." "Yeah. Some have Active Camo Generators, too." "Damn." The Chief stopped dead and signaled for everyone else to do so as well. "_Chief, I'll go on ahead. I have a Camo Generator too._" "_Good idea, Commander._" John marked Carter in his HUD as the latter disappeared into thin air. The marker floated down to the lower level and stopped behind a Brute. Carter faded back into view as he plunged his combat knife into its neck. Jun snapped off a quick shot that pierced another Brute's head, which alerted the Grunts and the last Brute to the Spartans and the Arbiter. Ten seconds later, the last Grunt died and the team ran to a platform identical to the map room where a Pelican dropship was waiting. "Come on, get in!" As they ran to the dropship, a shitload of Forerunner Sentinels poured out from below them. "Johnson, watch out!" "_I see them._" "Wait! Don't fire! These units have a different task." "And that would be?" "I don't know. But they are not programmed to harm you, Reclaimers."

"_Spartans, we need to take down the barrier surrounding Truth and fast. Spark has identified three towers that can disable the barrier.

I need you to split into two teams again, one to go with Johnson to take out tower #3, the rest will hit tower #1. The Arbiter and the Elites will disable Tower #2._" "Roger that, ma'am. Emile: you, James and Kat are with Johnson. Jorge, Jun, and the Chief are with me." "_This is Pelican Echo 041, which Spartans are with Johnson and which are going with me?"_ "Echo 041, you'll be picking up the remaining Spartans. Emile, James, and Kat: get going; we'll catch up later." The teams boarded their respective Pelicans, and left for the barriers.

25. Chapter 25

Chapter 25: Lynchpin

****AN's:** Well, LOTS is going to start soon, maybe next month, (That's Last of the Spartans, kind of a reference to the majorly successful ROTS machinamas [Rise of the Spartans] at least in the acronym) but nothing really major besides that, unless you guys want me to start one of the other fanfics on my profile page. This chapter will focus on Emile, James, and Kat's mission with Johnson to disable the third tower, you know: where Johnson gets ambushed and captured and forced to activate the Ark. (No, no one will die, yet. I'm not saying that someone won't in the future. I'll leave that open for my own debate.) So rate, review, follow, favorite, and enjoy.**

Pelican Echo 041 inbound to target designated Tower #3.

Emile scraped his kukri over his right arm's armor one last time before sheathing it on his right shoulder, while James and Kat loaded their Sniper Rifle and Assault Rifle, respectively. "_Alright, boys, here we go. Get ready to come out swinging._"

Sergeant Johnson, who was sitting next to Emile and calmly checking his DMR, now slammed a clip into the magazine well and stood up. "Now listen up! Those dumb apes think they can stop us from getting to that cocky bastard Truth and killing him, but I know that we will kill him! We will storm that beachhead, kill those inhuman sons-of-bitches, disable that tower, and while we do that, we will fill their gut full of lead and leave them to drown in their own blood!" There was a small contingent of marines on the dropship as well, and they all now stood up and gave a deafening "HOO-RAH!" as the Pelican landed on the beachhead.

The Spartans were the first out, and were immediately swamped by plasma fire from a pair of Shade Turrets. "I got this." James put his rifle on his back as he readied his Spartan Laser. He held in the trigger for a few seconds and the laser discharged into the first turret, blowing it and the other into Kingdom Come. "Damn, I got to get me one of those!" "Let's go!" James threw the laser back on his back and readied his Sniper Rifle. He snapped off three quick shot, all of which hit a Brute Chieftain straight in the head. The first two broke its shields and armor; the third flew through it and disintegrated on the rock behind it. Emile was charging with his shotgun in one hand and his combat knife in the other, which he threw at the first Brute he saw. He shot three Grunts with his shotgun before being blindsided by a Brute with a hammer. He shot the hammer out of its hands and stabbed it with his kukri, breaking its shields and piercing its neck instantly.

He stood up and retrieved his kukri, and was joined soon after by the rest of the team, who had been fighting further behind him. "Uhâ€¦ question. Do we have transport besides our own two feet?" "_Damn right, you do. Thought you could use these._" A Pelican swooped in and dropped off a Troop Transport Warthog and a Gauss Warthog. "We'll take the Gauss 'Hog."

The Spartans climbed into the Gauss 'Hog, with Emile driving and James operating the turret, while Kat helped herself to a grenade launcher in the side seat. "Oh, forgot about this." Emile handed a grenade to Kat. "Don't fire it too close to us though. It makes one hell of a bang." "Waitâ€¦ Where'd you find that at?" "I found it in the Pelican." "Oh, not these again." "James, just shut up, and start shooting." Emile started the engine and drove off towards the tower. "Commander Keyes: third tower in sight. Minor resistance so far." "_Good work. The Chief and the other Spartans have secured an LZ for the first tower, and the Elites have landed at the second._" "Watch out! Wraith!" Kat fired the grenade, and it hit the mortar tank straight on. The tank was obliterated, as were the Ghost and Chopper beside it. "What Wraith?" "Uhâ€¦ never mind." James opened fire on the infantry coming out of the tower entrance. "Too easy!" Emile gunned it straight into the entrance and nearly destroyed the 'Hog. "Next time, let me drive." "Yeah, sure." The three Spartans were soon joined by Johnson and the three remaining marines. "Let's get up there. Don't want to keep them waiting on us."

The journey to the top of the tower was an easy one. Just as they entered the observation floor with the controls to shut down the barrier, though, they were ambushed by Brutes of all ranks. The three marines were killed in mere seconds, and Johnson was separated from the three Spartans. "I'll hold 'em off! Disable the tower! Go!" James ran to the control panel, but as he stopped in front of the button, he was punched in the jaw and knocked to the ground by a Brute Chieftain. "Shit!" Emile and Kat were still standing, although each was engaged in melee combat: Emile wielding his kukri in his left hand and his combat knife in his right, and Kat using just her combat knife. Johnson, on the other hand, was not faring so well: He was surrounded by three Brute Captains and barely holding his own against them. Emile had slid his shotgun to the Sergeant, and he had used it to kill three other Brutes before running out of shells. "Come on, you damn apes! Come face the original Spartan!" James had been hauled up again, and was stabbing the Chieftain repeatedly with his knife to make it let go of his throat. "Ugh... your breath is terrible! Makes me gag just thinking about it!" Kat drew her trusty M6G Magnum (She had received a new one during the assault on Voi.) and fired at the Chieftain, making it drop James and focus on her instead. James now stabbed it through the neck, killing it instantly. Johnson was now incapacitated, but had killed two of the Captains before being completely blindsided by the third. "_Sergeant Johnson, get that shield down, ASAP!_" "Commander, Johnson is a POW, and we've been engaged by a lot of Brutes. We need some backup, NOW!" "_Roger that, NOBLE Four. Chief, link up with the Elites and proceed to the third tower, ASAP." "Yes, ma'am. Hang in there, Emile. Help's on the way._" Just then, Emile was hit by the blunt end of a Gravity Hammer, which discharged and sent him flying across the room and into the viewport glass. He fell with a _clunk _to the ground and didn't get back up, leaving a spider-web of cracks in the glass. James grabbed Emile's kukri and charged at the Brute Captain that wielded the Hammer, and suffered nearly the same fate as Emile, except that he was still conscious at the end, just too injured to keep fighting.

Kat was now surrounded by five Brutes of varying ranks. She quickly reloaded her M6G Magnum and dumped the whole clip into the first Brute that charged her, killing it, while she moved to make space to reload and fire. She now had her pistol in one hand and her knife in the other. She stabbed the unlucky Brute that charged her first and unloaded her entire clip into the next, but when she reached for another clip, she came up empty. _Damn!_ She flipped the Magnum around in her hand and now held it by the barrel, using it as a blunt instrument. Moments later, she was overwhelmed by the three Brutes and incapacitated.

The lead Chieftain threw down a holo-projector that acted as a comm to the Prophet of Truth. "Hierarch, we have secured the weak link. The barrier is safe." "_Very good. Bring the humans to the control room. I have need of two of them._" "What of the others?" "_Leave them; kill them; do as you please. Just bring me two._" "It shall be done. Bring the small one and the one with the skull head." "What of the others?" "Leave them; They shall die soon anyway as we ascend to the heavens." The Brutes picked up Johnson and Emile and left Kat and James to their fates.

"Uhâ€¦" James slowly stood up and looked around the room. _Where is everyone?_ Kat was lying on the floor, unconscious, and Emile and Johnson were gone. _Captured by the Brutes, probably._ He slowly limped over to Kat's body and tried to awaken her, but to no avail. _Looks like I'm on my own, here. Gotta get out of here and find John._ He collapsed onto the elevator as he activated it, and at the bottom were the other Spartans and the Elites. "James!" "Johnson and Emileâ€¦" captured by the Brutesâ€¦" James now lost consciousness and fell to the ground mere seconds after getting up again.

26. Chapter 26

Chapter 26: Silenced

****AN:** Quick question for all of my loyal readers out there, do you think my writing has improved since the start of this book? And how can I make it better? I would appreciate your feedback on this matter. Thanks!******

Carter stood up in the Pelican's troop bay as it descended to the beachhead where his team would deploy. "_This is it, Spartans, the first tower. Lots of contacts on the ground. Get ready to- SHIT! AA Wraith! Evasive maneuvers!_" Too late. The fuel rod projectiles from the AA Wraith hit the Pelican straight in the back, dislodging the Warthog and destabilizing the dropship. "_I gotta put her down here, boys. Too risky to try anywhere else. Good luck._" "Move, move, move!" Jun, Jorge, and the Chief all stormed out of the troop as fast as they could, with Carter being the last one out. "Shade Turrets! Fire and maneuver! Hit them from the side!" The Chief pulled up his Spartan Laser and took careful aim so as to hit one of the turrets and the Brute behind it. It worked. The turret was decimated and the Brute was struck down as well. "One down!" Jun took a pot shot at the Grunt operator of the other turret, and three shots later, it was destroyed as well. A red laser streaked through the air and hit the power core on the back of the AA Wraith, detonating it and destroying the tank. "LZ secured, Commander. Nothing moving." "_Hold position, I'm on my way. Spark believes that Truth will activate the rings at

any time. If he does, Humanityâ€¦ The Covenantâ€¦ Halo will kill us all. Get to the first tower and shut it down. The other Spartans have secured a foothold near the third, and the Elites have touched down at the second._

A Pelican flew in from the general direction of the _Dawn_ and dropped off a modified Warthog and a Mongoose. "I'll take the Mongoose; you guys get the 'Hog." The Chief jumped on the driver's seat of the ATV while Carter and Jun jumped into the front of the 'Hog. It had no turret on the back, instead modified to hold Jorge's modified MK. V armor and equipped with a rail to mount his MG on. "Clear! Let's get going."

The vehicles took off up a large hill to an overlook on the tower entrance. "Tower in sight! Watch for heavy armor." The Chief sped over the ridge and crashed his 'Goose into the front end of a Wraith. "I could use this." He jumped onto the outer hull and ripped open the hatch to the pilot's seat, grabbed the Brute pilot and threw him out, and then jumped into the seat and closed the hatch. "Now _this_ is more like it." He turned and fired on the Brutes and Grunts emerging from the entrance to the tower. The ball of superheated plasma tore into the Covie lines, decimating them. "_Nice job, Chief. Let's get in there, disable that tower._" The Chief exited the Wraith and stuck a nearby plasma grenade on the power core, destroying the tank. "Good thinking."

Inside the tower, the Spartans fought through many Grunts and Jackals, aided very minimally by their Brute leaders. The four found an elevator up to the observation room, which supposedly held the controls for the barrier. At the top, the team encountered a team of Brutes led by a Hammer-swinging nut-job of a Chieftain. (Not really. It was very intelligent. For a Brute.) The Chief pulled up his Spartan Laser and charged it, but the Brute saw it and dove just as the laser discharged. "Shit! Engage!" Carter slammed a fresh clip into his DMR and sniped a Brute captain before it could react, and Jun and Jorge took down the Chieftain with combined fire that would have made a Hunter take cover. (And not just behind its big-ass shield.) The Chief tossed a frag grenade at a pair of Brutes that were hiding to regenerate their shields. The grenade killed both, and with that, the room fell silent. "Looks clear." "Does someone have Active Camouflage on?" "Noâ€¦ Why?" "Okay then." The Chief grabbed the shotgun off of his back, swiveled around, and fired straight at Carter. The 8-Gauge buckshot pellets tore into a camouflaged Brute that was standing in front of the Spartan Commander. "Hey, what theâ€¦ oh." Jun ran to the window and hit a button which shut down the power to that part of the shield. "_Good work, the Elites should be just about to~_" The tower next to theirs shut down. "_That's two. It's all up to Johnson and the other Spartans now._"

A minute passed without the third tower shutting down. "_Sergeant_ _Johnson, get that shield down, ASAP!" "Commander, Johnson is a POW, and we've been engaged by a lot of Brutes. We need some backup, NOW!" "Roger that, NOBLE Four. Chief, link up with the Elites and proceed to the third tower, ASAP._" "Yes, ma'am. Hang in there, Emile. Help's on the way." The Spartans sprinted to the elevator and jumped out when they had enough clearance to jump. They jumped into their vehicles and sped back to the beach, ignoring all along their path.

At the beach, two Hornet attack craft dropped out of the sky and

landed square in front of the Spartans. "I won't fit in or on those."
"_That's okay, Jorge. We have a Pelican inbound to pick you up._"
"Thank you, Commander." The Pelican flew in and Jorge stepped on,
while Carter, John and Jun got in or on one of the Hornets. "See you
at the tower." The Hornet, under the deft control of Jun, bobbed and
weaved to evade plasma fire from numerous Banshees and Loyalist
Phantoms. They passed the second tower with Jorge's Pelican trailing
by just a few hundred feet. As they neared the third, however, the
Pelican stopped dead. "_AA Wraiths. You need to take them out before
I can drop these boys off._" Jun fired a pair of missiles at the
nearest Wraith while Carter pulled up his Rocket Launcher and blew up
the other with both rockets. "Area's clear, Lieutenant. Put her
down." "_Roger that._" The Pelican and Hornet descended as a
Separatist Phantom dropped in and deployed 5 Elites, The Arbiter
among them. "We must move, Spartans, your friends will not last
long." The Brutes outside the tower fell quickly to the combined
firepower of ODST's, Sangheili, and Spartans.

Inside, there were four Jackals, a shitload of Drones, and a pair of
Hunters. "Fuck this shit." Carter reloaded his RL and fired both
rockets at the same Hunter, killing it and about 10 Drones. "I'm
out." The second Hunter fell to an inhuman (or rather in-alien)
amount of lead spewed from Jorge's machine gun. The Jackals ran away
as their walking tank friends died, and the Drones, which evidently
couldn't tell that they were fighting Demons, fell to another barrage
of lead from Jorge. "Clear!" The rest of the trip to the elevator was
relatively easy, with only minor resistance. As they reached the
elevator, the Arbiter began to walk away. "Disable this tower and the
barrier will fall. Go Spartans! We have no time to waste." The
elevator appeared and was descending towards the four humans. On it
was one very badly beaten up Spartan-II. "James!" "Johnson and
Emileâ€¦ Captured by the Brutes." James lost consciousness and fell
to the ground. "Jorge, Jun: get him out of here. We'll go disable the
tower." "Sir. Commander Keyes, we need extraction on the double."
"_On my way._"

Carter and the Chief, supported by the Arbiter and the two remaining
Elites, swept through the tower to the elevator up to the observation
room, and again, the Arbiter and the Elites stayed behind. "We will
defend this area, Spartans. Go! Before the Prophet activated the
rings!" At the top, the Spartans found the room filled withâ€¦
nothing. "Kat!" Carter ran to the Lt. Commander's limp body and
checked to see if she was still alive. "She's alive, but injured. I
don't think she's coming to anytime soon." "Get her out of here. I'll
handle the tower." "Alright." Carter slung Kat over his shoulder and
walked to the elevator. "Good luck, Chief." "You too." John walked
over to the window and pushed the button to deactivate the tower and
the barrier. "_Good work, Chief. Shipmaster, begin orbital
bombardment." "I shall beat the Prophet's guards until the land is
glass._"

The CCS-Class _Shadow of Intent_ flew into view, just as a slipspace
rupture opened above the battlefield. "_High Charity, By the Gods-
BRACE FOR IMPACT!"_ Small meteor-like objects separated from the main
structure and hurtled for the ground. One of these shot straight
through Shipmaster Vadum's ship. Another shot through the window of
the third tower.

"_Shipmaster, what's your status?" "Sustained major damage! Weapon
system offline." "Chief, get out of there, get to the Citadel, and

stop Truth." "_Yes, ma'am." John shouldered his MA5C Assault Rifle and fired into the flood ofâ€¦ well, Flood, that was coming at him. He let a few of the little infectors bounce off of his shields while he reloaded and then made a mad dash for the elevator. "Commander, there's Flood here. Get Kat out, now." "_Already done, Chief. We're on a Pelican back to the Dawn as we speak, andâ€¦ wait; did you say Flood?!" "_I did. Get Jorge and Jun, and we'll assault through to Truth's location." "_Roger that, Chief." The Chief fought down to the ground floor and found the Arbiter slicing through the last of the Flood swarm. "Spartan! We must go, now! The Parasite's arrival will only accelerate the Prophet's plans." "_Why would the Parasite come here?!" "The Ark is out of range of all the active Installations! Priority: we must contain~" "No. First we stop Truth, and then we deal with the Flood."_"

The Arbiter and the Chief left the tower and found a Pelican dropping off the other three Spartans and a pair of Warthogs. "Let's move, now!" The team piled in and sped off towards the Citadel. A minute later, the Citadel was in sight, and the two LRV's began to take a beating from the Covenant forces there. "Citadel in sight, Commander, and the Brutes are throwing everything they've got at us." They sped past a sniper tower and a Wraith tank, while nearly skidding off of the edge of the cliff. A Hornet and a Falcon, outfitted with special Spartan Lasers instead of machine guns, landed on a nearby overlook. "_Birds are in the nest, Spartans. Good luck."_" "Chief: You and the Arbiter take the Hornet, we'll take the Falcon." "On it, Commander." The Chief took the pilot's seat, while the Arbiter rode shotgun, and Carter piloted the Falcon. "_Aw, fuck! Scarab!" "Not just any Scarab. I think that's a Super Scarab!" "All units: concentrate fire on the Scarab!" "_Chief, what's so special about a Super Scarab?"_" "_A Super Scarab, Spartan, is a much more heavily armed and armored variant of the Scarab, and is nearly invulnerable."_" "_Ohâ€¦!"_" "_Let's stay focused. Take out the legs, and then we'll expose and hit the power core."_" The Scarab's main gun charged, and obliterated a column of Scorpion tanks sent to support the Spartans. "_DAMN!"_" Jorge discharged the mounted Laser and broke through the hydraulics in the front right leg. "_Got one! Front right!" "Hi the back left next! That way, it can't get up very easily!"_" The next leg went down after another barrage of Lasers and missiles and chainguns. The Super Scarab stooped to the ground in order to stop it from toppling like an AT-AT on Hoth (Whoops! Wrong multi-million dollar sci-fi universe!) "_Yeah-hoo! You're all clear, Chief! Let's blow this thing and go kill that Prophet!"_" The Chief let loose a volley of rockets into the ass-end of the Scarab, exposing the fragile and volatile plasma reactor. Another pair went out and collided with the reactor, starting a chain reaction that would destroy the Scarab. "_MOVE! HAUL ASS, SPARTANS!"_" Ten seconds later, the reactor detonated with the force of a MAC focused on the head of a pin.

The Falcon and the Hornet landed on a bridge that connected to the Citadel where Truth was about to activate the ring. During the run inside, the Chief pulled his Spartan Laser off of his back and readied it, while the Arbiter and Carter readied Energy Swords. Jun slapped a fresh clip into his Sniper Rifle, and Jorge checked his machine gun. "_Chief, how close are you to the control room?"_" The group stormed onto the elevator up to the control room as Truth gave a 'final speech' to his followers. "Not close enough."

"My faithfulâ€¦ stand firmâ€¦ Though our enemies crowd around us, we tread the blessed path. In a moment, I will light the rings! And all

who believeâ€¦ shall be saved!"

At the top, the group was ambushed by another swarm of Flood, but as they tore into the Parasite, it _talked_ to them. "Do not shoot, but listen! Let me lead you safely to our foe. Only you can halt what he has set in motion." The Flood forms moved around the Humans and the Arbiter, as if unaware of them. The group charged through two corridors filled with Covenant fighting the Flood and being slowly defeated. In the third and final corridor, the Covenant had been defeated and were being assimilated into the Flood. The Chief activated a light bridge at the end of the corridor, and the five warriors prepared to finish the decades long Human-Covenant War.

****Virtual pat-on-the-back to anyone who can guess why I capitalized 'Citadel'. (NO GOOGLING ALLOWED! CHEETAHS! You should know this!)**

27. Chapter 27

Chapter 27: Remnants

****AN's: We now near the end of Halo 3! This chapter is, sadly, going to be short: just a wrap-up of The Covenant, and a small intro to the next chapter.****

The Spartans and the Arbiter stormed across the light bridge that crossed the gap to the controls for the Ark. The Spartans noticed a beaten and bruised Sgt. Johnson lying on the ground at the mercy of a Brute Captain. "Goâ€¦ Aheadâ€¦ end it!" A shotgun blast rang out, and the Captain was swept aside by Emile, who had taken a nearby shotgun. "Not yet."

Emile was bleeding profusely out of his left arm and a gash in his midsection, and now collapsed from blood loss, revealing the body of Commander Miranda Keyes, killed by Truth with five Brute Spiker shots in the back. Sgt. Johnson now noticed the four Spartans. "Stop the ringsâ€¦ save the rest." Even in full body armor, it was obvious that the Spartans were all disheartened by the loss of Commander Keyes.

The four walked over to the control panel for the rings, and found the Arbiter holding the Prophet of Truth by the neck. "Can you see, Arbiter? The moment of salvation is at hand." "It will not last!" "Your kindâ€¦ never believed in the promise of the sacred rings." It was apparent that Truth had been infected by the Flood, because now the Gravemind spoke through Truth. "_Lies for the weak. Beacons for the deluded._" The Arbiter drew back his Energy Sword and activated it. "I will have my revenge! On a Prophet! Not a plague!" "My feet tread the path. I shall become a god!" "_You will be food! Nothing more._" Tentacles had begun to sprout from Truth's face as the Flood infection progressed, and Carter approached the panel, ready to deactivate the rings and save all sentient life in the Milky Way. "NO!" Carter pressed the holographic button to deactivate the rings. The Arbiter turned Truth around, ready to finish him. "Iâ€¦ Amâ€¦ Truth! The voice of the Covenant!"

"And soâ€¦ You must be silenced."

The Arbiter stabbed Truth through the back with his Sword, ending the last High Prophet's life. The body fell to the ground and did not move again.

Now a sinister laugh filled the room. Johnson had started a crashed Pelican and was flying towards the hole in the viewport that Keyes had made on her way in. Massive tentacles shot in through the surrounding viewports. "_Now the weak have been slain._" Jorge, Jun, and Carter jumped into the Pelican as it exited the control room, leaving the Chief and the Arbiter. "_I can barely keep control of this bird, Chief! Head back to the elevator, I'll pick you up outside._" The Chief and the Arbiter took off towards the elevator. "We traded one villain for another."

The pair arrived at the elevator, but it wouldn't start. "We need to find a way out of here." "What about that duct, there?" "Good eye. I'll go down first." The Chief jumped down the shaft, AR at the ready in case there were more Flood at the bottom. What he saw, though, astonished him. It was Cortana, at the far end of the hallway. The Arbiter landed behind him just as he began following Cortana. "What is it, Spartan?" The Chief ignored him, intent on finding out where Cortana was leading him. He followed the AI until he came to a console. "What do you see?" The Chief pushed the only button on the console, expecting to see his lost AI. Instead, the wall behind the console moved. Instantly, John had his Assault Rifle up and pointed at what was apparently a window. Outside, there was nothing. Then the ground outside retracted, ejecting another Halo. "A replacement for the one you destroyed." "When did you know?" John was talking to the Monitor, who now revealed himself. "Just now. But, I had my hopes." "What will you do now, Spartan?" "Light it." "Excellent! I shall make the final preparations, though it will take some time to fabricate an Activation Index." The Monitor flew off towards the departing Halo. "How will you light it?" The Chief turned, indicating towards the crashed Covenant Holy City of High Charity, now a mess of Flood. "Sergeant-Major, we need extraction. Sending coordinates." "_On my way. By the way, there's a giant ring leaving the Ark._" "We know. It's a Halo. A replacement."

UNSC Forward Unto Dawn CIC.

"You can't be serious, Master Chief. That's a suicide mission." "I know." "Then why would you even think to go?" "I made a promise." "Screw promises! Which is more important: An AI whose condition is completely unknown or a Spartan who can actually help us kill the Flood now?" "Commander, He'll come back." "We don't know that." "_I_ do. The Chief and I have been through much worse than this." "Give me one example." "You want to know how I got a prosthetic left arm? Me, The Chef, and two other Spartans fought a pair of Hunters, without any heavy weapons. I'll be discharged before I count the Chief as dead." "Fine, but I don't like this one bit." "Why?" "I've already lost so many Spartans due to my own orders, most recently Six and Thom." "I'm coming back. Commander."

28. Chapter 28

Chapter 28: The Flood

**AN's: Wassup?! So, I have to apologize in advance for what I am about to do, but just read this for now, and the note at the end of

the chapter will explain why. This chapter will cover Cortana and the first part of Halo, since the former is extremely short, albeit tedious. ****_**Update**_****: My writing style may change after this chapter, mainly due to my reading a lot of Fanfictions, namely DemonFireX's Crysxis Effect and SpartaLazor's Three are Better than One and A Cord of Three. (All are very good. If you haven't already, check them out. My personal recommendations.)**

The Chief piloted his Banshee with ease, flying towards the torn and burning outer hull of High Charity. He landed just inside and ejected from the Banshee. He realized that this was the first time in a while that he was truly on his own in a mission, since not even Cortana was there to help him. The last time was on Installation 04, when he had first fought the Flood, and that had been almost 7 months ago.

The Chief practically raced through the ship, desperate to find Cortana before the Gravemind realized he was here. "_Child of my enemy, why have you come?_" Too late. The Chief raced on, constantly impeded by the Flood. He entered a small room with an AI pedestal covered in an energy shield. He ran over and smashed his fist into the shield, breaking it, and freeing the AI inside.

"You found me."

John knelt down beside Cortana's pedestal. "But so much of me is corrupted, broken. You may have come too late." "You know me: When I make a promise—" "You keep it." She suddenly sat up. "I _do_ know how to pick 'em." "Do you still have it?" "The Activation Index from the first Halo?" She extended her hand and the Index appeared. "Thought I'd keep it, as a souvenir. How do you plan to get out?" "Thought I'd try shooting my way out. Mix things up a little." The Chief stood up and took Cortana's vacant data chip out of his helmet. Cortana put her hand on it and entered the chip, which John put back in his armor.

"Chief, we can't let the Flood spread any further; we have to destroy High Charity." John left the room. "_Now, at last, I see! Her secret is revealed!_" John entered the reactor room. "Here, we can destroy these three reactor pylons. That will cause an overload, destroying High Charity and the Flood at the same time." The Chief threw a plasma grenade at the nearest reactor pylon, which landed on a ledge surrounding it and detonated, destroying the pylon. "One down, Chief! Two to go."

Twenty seconds later, the last one blew up. "Nice job, Chief. Let's get out of here." The Chief ran through the nearest open door, only to find it a dead end. "Damn. Cortana?" "I've found another, marking it now." A familiar blue diamond appeared on John's HUD, marking another door across the room. John sprinted to it, pumping a Sangheili Combat Form full of lead from his MA5C Assault Rifle. He reloaded on the run, slamming the 32 round clip home with the efficiency that only decades of military experience gave someone.

The door opened and ten Infection Forms poured out of the opening. John leapt back a foot and dumped his entire clip into them, remembering the last time an Infection Form had surprised him like that. "Chief, you okay? Your heart rate just went through the roof." "Fine. Just a bad memory." "The _Autumn's_ engineering bay, right?" "Yeah." "You know I'll do everything I can to make sure that doesn't

happen, right?" "I know." **(I'll explain this later on, after the destruction of the new Halo.)**

The Chief wound his way back the way he came, although he needed to detour quite a few times due to collapsed tunnels and Flood biomass blockages. As he neared the area he had come in through, a pair of blue diamonds appeared on his HUD. "Cortana?" "I've picked up two friendlies. Who would be crazy enough to come _here_?"

The two turned out to be Carter and The Arbiter. "Chief!" "Spartan!" "Waitâ€¦ you two made nice? What else have you done in my absence?" "Chief, come on! We found a Pelican over here!" The three climbed into the crashed dropship and John inserted Cortana into the mainframe. The Pelican took off, but a tentacle wrapped around it, only to retreat under the searing heat of the engines.

"Sergeant Johnson, come in." "_I'm here, Chief. Did you find Cortana?_" "I'm fine, Sergeant." "_Nice work, Chief. I'll bring the Dawn as close as I can to the Control room_" "Safe is better than close, Sergeant-Major." "_Will do. And ma'am? It's good to have you back._" "Good to be back, Sergeant." The link was severed as the Pelican flew at full burn towards the ring. Cortana brought the dropship in just a hair too fast, and ended up crashing it into a snow embankment. "Next time, I'm flying." "Not with your track record with Pelicans, you're not." "One time. One. Damn. Time." "And we will never let you forget."

The Chief grabbed Cortana's data chip and placed it in his helmet before leaving the dropship. Carter followed him, and the Arbiter brought up the rear. The sound of engines overhead told them that the _Dawn_ had arrived as well. "_Chief, the _Dawn_ is here. I've got the rest of your unit with me, and we're headed to the Control Room._" "Got it, Sergeant. Stay safe." "_Will do, Chief._" The Chief grabbed an assault rifle and a pair of SMG's that were lying on the ground, and Carter emerged with a DMR cradled in his hands. The Arbiter had a Covenant Carbine and his Sword on his hip. "Let's go." The trio set off towards the Control Room. "This placeâ€¦ it's so elegant in its unfinished state." "Too bad it's going to be blown to smithereens soon."

As they entered the valley containing the Control Room, multiple 'meteorites' crashed down around them. "_FOOLS! You thought me gone! I shall rebuild! Starting with your corpses!_" "Damnit! Really thought we had killed this asshole already." "Quit bitching, start shooting." Multitudes of Flood Forms charged at the trio, and were cut down by precision fire from Carter and The Arbiter, and withering fire from the Chief's SMG's. "Come on!" The three pushed through steadily, two steps forward, one step back, figuratively. They reached the entrance to the control room, with support fire from Sgt. Johnson and his Spartan Laser. "_I got your backs, boys. Get in there and light this bitch._" "Will do. Good luck out here." "

**On a side note: I REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, need your input on a matter that is very pressing to me right now: I have started a few chapters for a new story, and I need to know if you people will actually read it, or make me take it down after three chapters like the last one. I'm thinking of starting a Halo-Mass Effect Cross. Since I can't get input from you willingly, I have made the decision to stall production of this until I get some opinions on this. Sorry, but it's the only way I can think of to get you to talk to me. That,

and I'm getting bored writing Spartans all the time; I need another story to write. I'm thinking of crossing NOBLE Six into the ME Timeline beginning with ME2. So tell me what you think.**

URDNOT WREX! (The single most badass soldier EVER!)

29. Chapter 29

Chapter 29: Halo

AN: Thanks to all who gave an opinion on starting a new story. I felt like an asshole when I made the decision to stop this for a bit, but like I said, I needed a break, partially because I was getting bored, and also (thanks to Winter's Sentinel for pointing this out) my writing was getting repetitive and hard to follow. But I have refined it, and in my opinion, it is better. My new story will be up when I finish up this one, so plan for about two months (Yes, H4 is **_that**_** short.). On a side note, I really hate it when **_**guests**_** try to flame. That annoys me more than actual flamers. To all those people: get a spine and make a real account, I'm sure that would make all of us writers, who put our time and effort into writing these, and we don't even get anything out of this, a lot happier. On a better note, I have given it some thought, and I will start answering reviews in the notes, not in PM's. But that's next chapter.**

Halo Installation 04B.

"Up to the control room, Chief! We'll cover you!" Carter shouted.

John ran as fast as he dared up the ramps while firing into the torrent of Flood forms that hounded him the whole way up. A Sangheili Combat Form jumped him at the top and managed to grab ahold of John's shoulder and throw him to the ground. John quickly drew his M6C Magnum and dumped the clip into the Form, but it ignored the bullets and started beating the Chief to death.

As John's shields broke, the Flood form was torn apart from behind by a shotgun blast. John heard the sound of an M45 Tactical shotgun being racked, and an armored hand reached down and hauled him up as the shotgun registered again.

On the other end of the weapon stood Emile, who seemed perfectly fine even though he had just had the shit beat out of him by the Brutes not 12 hours ago.

"Nice of you to show up." John commented.

"Thought I'd let you handle it, Chief. Let's go, the rest of the team has secured the entrance." Emile said.

"James and Kat are back on their feet?" The Chief asked as they ran and he reloaded.

"James is. Kat is still recovering on the _Dawn_, and providing tactical support."

They reached the walkway just below the entrance, and were ambushed

by Flood Tank Forms.

Emile dumped two shells into one, while John emptied his MA5C clip into another. A red laser shot down from the cliffs and decimated another, but a fourth was left unchecked.

"_I got your back, Chief. Get to the control room, ASAP._" Sgt. Johnson said over the comms.

John slammed the butt of his AR into the Tank Form, and it disintegrated. The other slapped Emile to the ground and broke his shields.

"Emile!" John said as he turned.

The Chief acted in a split second: He tackled the Tank form, an impressive feat in-and-of itself, and cut its head off with his combat knife. Then, to make sure it didn't attack again, he dumped his entire AR and Magnum clips into its chest cavity.

He stood up and hauled Emile to his feet.

"Looks like we're even now." John said.

"Who's counting?" Emile replied.

Carter and the Arbiter joined them shortly after they made it to the entrance. Sgt. Johnson caught up a few minutes after, with the Monitor trailing just behind him.

"_Wait, is that the Monitor? What else have you been doing in my absence?_" Cortana asked.

"Plenty." James responded.

"The Flood is coming this way; we must seal the entrance behind us." 343 Guilty Spark said.

The group, more like a small army, entered the structure and proceeded to the control room.

"_John, let me take Cortana to the console._" James said over a private comm channel.

"_Why?_"

"_'Cause knowing _this_ floating asshole, he'll go crazy and blast us. I don't want anyone except me to take that blast._"

"_Alright. Just be on guard._" John said.

"_Johnson, you and the rest of the team stay out here and cover our exit. James and I are going in._" _The Chief ordered over the local comm.

"_Got it, Chief._ _Alright, boys! We're holding this door at any costs! Let's set up, and give those ugly sons-of-bitches a reason to go crying to their mommies!_"

James and John walked into the control room, and Johnson gave James

his Laser.

"You'll need this more than I will if you're fighting Flood." James said.

"Nah. I got a surprise for them."

He pulled out a grenade launcher and loaded in a grenade.

"It's one of those, right?"

"You betcha." Johnson answered with a smirk.

The door closed after Johnson walked back out.

James walked up to the console, Cortana's chip in hand, and as he did, the Monitor flew in beside him.

"Reclaimers! This installation is nearly complete! By my calculations, it will be ready to activate in a few days."

"Yeah, shove it, Lightbulb. We don't have a few days." James said in disgust.

"What are you implying, Reclaimer?"

"I'm gonna light this thing now."

Spark abruptly flew in front of the Spartan.

"You cannot! The forces generated will destroy the Ark and this installation!"

"Like I said: I'm lighting it, and you can go fuck yourself. So get out of my- UGH!"

James was cut off as Spark shot an energy beam at him.

"I cannot allow you to do that. You are the children of my makers, Inheritors of everything they left behind." His 'eye' turned red.
"But this ring is mine."

John raised his Assault Rifle and fired a 10 round burst, but it had no effect. He dove as Spark shot a laser beam at him, which caught the II in the knee and drained his shields to 30%.

He quickly recovered and sprayed the rest of his clip at the rampant AI, but again, with no effect.

The AI launched another beam at John, but he dodged this one.

"Hey, asshole! Catch!"

A red laser shot across the room, and hit the AI straight in the 'eye'. James had hauled himself up to a sitting position and fired Johnson's Laser.

"My eye! Do you intend to destroy me, Reclaimers?!"

"Yes I fucking do!" James yelled as he fired again.

The blast just missed the Monitor.

"James! Throw me the Laser!" John shouted.

He did, and the Chief caught it seamlessly. He rolled as Spark fired again, and fired a laser of his own. It hit straight on, and Spark began toâ€| well, spark, and sputter, evidence of the extensive damage done to his frame.

"Th-th-th-th-think about your f-f-f-forefathers!"

Spark fired again, and caught John in the gut, throwing him off his feet, and sending the Laser spinning away.

James slowly got up, and in a last ditch attempt to kill the Monitor, jumped on it and began stabbing it more times than one could shake a stick at. He then picked up the sparking Monitor and threw it into the chasm beneath the platform.

"First rule of the universe: don't fuck with Spartans."

He stood up and placed Cortana's data chip near the console in the center of the room so that the AI could 'migrate' into the ring's systems.

"There, the ring is activated. Let's get out of here."

Andâ€| done. Next up, the escape from Halo, and the end of the Human-Covenant War. I'll say it, I'm actually happy to be done with the Halo Trilogy, even though I never wrote for CE (that will be told during the next few chapters). Why you ask? Well, the trilogy is cool and all, but it's veryâ€| restricted. It's long and tedious, and in the end, it's a cliffhanger. But that's what made it cool. So for now, I bid you all good nightâ€| and Big Balls. (NOT THAT KIND, YOU SICK BASTARDS!)

30. Chapter 30

Chapter 30: Forward Unto Dawn

Well, this is it. The end of Halo 3, and the ¾ mark in the book. Thanks to all of you for sticking around this long, and if you're just now getting into the book, that's fine, too. But that's all that fluff BS, so let's get to the action, but not before I respond to reviews!

** Winter's Sentinel**_**: **_**So there **_**are**_** others who watch it! I knew it!**

** Guest: I hope it's decent.**

** SpartaLazor**_**:**_** Good point. By the way, I have probably 10-12 chapters left.**

** Anonymous Flamer (not an actual user, just my nickname for a guest reviewer): You started off well! But I had to do it to get opinions. **_**Protocol dictates Action! As does past experience. **_** And what do you have against Kat?**

** Trollface41: He had to. Think about it: He had just gotten a gut full of Gravity Hammer and slammed into Forerunner glass, and he could barely even stay standing. There was no way in ****_**hell**_**** he was going to carry or drag a half-ton Spartan with him.**

**I think that's it. If I missed anything, let me know. And if I didn't respond your review, I will **

Installation 04B.

The Chief and James pried open the doors out of the control room. Outside, The rest of NOBLE Team, along with Sgt. Johnson and the Arbiter, stood their ground as waves of Flood surged at them.

"Let's get the fuck out of here! This ring is going to go!" James shouted.

All 8 primed grenades and threw them into the mass of Flood, the combined blasts punching a big enough gap for the group to start moving.

In the cramped corridors of the control room accessway, the team had little room to get good shots, so it was up to The Chief, Johnson, and the Arbiter to clear a path forward. The three hammered the Flood forces back while NOBLE fought to stop the Flood from flanking them.

"Fucking die already!" Johnson shouted at the parasites.

He finally had had enough of this shit, and pulled out his Grenade Launcher, already loaded with one of his own grenades.

"Don't! You'll kill us all!" Emile shouted.

"Not if I fire it far enough ahead!" Avery retorted.

The Sergeant did just that: he fired. The grenade arced into the air and came crashing down into the swarm, decimating their ranks. None of the humans or their Sangheili cohort ended up dead.

"Kat, we've activated the ring. We need you to get a Pelican to the control room and pick us up, ASAP." Carter ordered over the comms.

"_I'm on it, Commander. ETA: 5 minutes._"

"We'll be dead in five minutes." Jorge said after the link had closed.

"Spartans never die, Jorge. They're just missing in action." James rebuked.

Five minutes seemed like five years as the group held off a renewed assault by the Flood, and now Forerunner Sentinels, on the cliffs outside of the control room. A Pelican began raining hell down on the Flood and Forerunners, and descended to the group.

"_Ride's here, boys._"

The Spartans jumped in first, with Johnson and the Arbiter stepping in as the Pelican lifted off for the _Dawn_ and their ticket off of the ring.

The Pelican landed in the hangar bay as the ring finished its charging sequence.

"To the bridge! Go!" The Chief ordered as he, James, and Emile secured the hangar.

The rest went to get the ship off of the ring. The _Dawn_'s engines flared and the ship began to leave the surface.

The Chief plugged Cortana's data chip into the AI pedestal nearby, and she assisted the group on the bridge.

The _Dawn_ left the ring's atmosphere as the firing sequence neared completion, and as they made it to the portal back to Earth, the ring fired, shaking itself to pieces. The shockwaves created instability in the portal, and it collapsed as the front half of the ship made it through.

__-X-__

_Planet Earth. March 3__rd__, 2553._

The remains of NOBLE Team stood at attention alongside Sergeant Johnson, the Arbiter, and a squad of marines as Lord Hood stood in front of the memorial to all those who died in the Human-Covenant War.

"For us, the storm has passed, the War is over. But let us not forget those who journeyed into the harrowing dark, and did not return. For they made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we may begin to rebuild. And as we do, this hillside will remain barren, in memorial of heroes fallen. We will never forget."

The Admiral removed his cap as Carter barked out a crisp order.

"PRESENT ARMS!"

The assembled soldiers aimed their Battle Rifles into the air and a 21-gun salute rang out through the evening air.

The Admiral walked over to the Arbiter.

"I remember how this war started, what your kind did to mine. I can't forget that. Butâ€¦ you have my thanks, for standing by them to the end. Hard to believe they're dead."

Hood extended his hand to the Arbiter, and the Sangheili shook it.

"Were it so easy."

Everyone but the Spartans left. They walked over to the memorial.

"What now, sir?" Jorge asked.

"Wellâ€¦ I don't know." Carter responded.

"What can we do? There won't be any more fighting for a while. I guess we just become civilians." Jun said.

"I know one thing we can do." Kat said as she took her combat knife out of its sheath.

She cut into the stone, etching the service tags of the Spartans of NOBLE who died on Reach and Halo.

B-312.

_ A-239._

_ S-005._

_ S-117._

She stood up and rejoined the others.

"I know you weren't an official part of NOBLE, Master Chief, but your name will be remembered forever in our history." Carter eulogized.

"You were true heroes, all of you. I'm honored to have served with you." Jorge added.

"You all made the phrase 'Spartans Never Die' seem all too true." Jun put in.

"And you ended the greatest threats to humanity. You are true Spartans." Kat added.

"I only hope that we can aspire to be like all of you." Carter finished.

"Attention!" He ordered.

The team all stood to attention and snapped a long and respectful salute to their fallen comrades across all branches of the UNSC.

As they left, Carter's TACPAD dinged as he received a new message.

"Huh?"

It was from Colonel Holland. Apparently, he had made it back to Earth, and now ONI wanted all Spartans to report to an orbital station for a new assignment.

"Looks like we have a new mission, NOBLE."

"Where are we headed, Commander?" Jorge asked.

"An ONI station in orbit. All surviving Spartans are being called there."

"Then let's not keep the spooks waiting. Shall we?" Jun indicated to

a Pelican that had three other Spartans, II's, inside.

"Welcome aboard, NOBLE." One of them said as the team embarked.

"Who are you three?" Carter asked.

"I'm Maverick, this is Barnes, and he's Aztec. We're Raptor Team. What's left of it, anyway."

"You three know anything about what's going on?"

"Just as much as you do." Aztec replied.

The Pelican took off for the station.

X

3 days earlier.

_ UNSC Forward Unto Dawn. Aft Section._

The ship was dark. Light shone from the hangar bay, and inside, Emile, James, and John were adjusting to the lack of gravity and atmosphere.

"_Cortana, what happened?_" The Chief asked.

"_The ring fired. It caused the portal to collapse. We made it through just in time._"

The AI planted a NAV marker in the Spartan's HUD's. The endpoint was the ship's crew deck, cut clean in half.

"_At least, most of us._"

"_Good goddamn._" James commented.

"_That's a big hole._" Emile said.

The three backtracked to a cryo bay, where Cortana had prepped three pods.

"_I'll drop a beacon, but it'll be a while before anyone finds us._"

The Spartans climbed into the pods.

"_Years even._"

"_Wake us. When you need us._" The Chief told the AI.

"_I'll miss you._" She said as the door sealed and frost covered the glass.

The three Spartans descended into cryosleep, unaware that in four years' time, they would be called upon once again to save humanity.

****That's it for this, folks! Next up: NOBLE's induction into the IV's, and a few short stories about their training on the**

****_**Infinity.**_**** After that, a chapter dedicated to Cortana and the Chief's recollections about their adventures on the first Halo, and then we move into the final section of the book, Halo 4.**

31. Chapter 31

Chapter 31: The Thursday Wars

****What's new, people?! A new chapter of SND, that's what! Did anyone get the Crysis reference in the last chapter? Barnes? Laurence Barnes? Prophet? On a more relevant note, Raptor Team will make more appearances in the book, so expect that, and that's about all. Now, how about those reviews?***

****Trollface41: OF COURSE I'M HAVING JOHNSON APPEAR IN HALO 4! Are you crazy!? I would be such an ass if I didn't! And like I said, of course I'll beta-read for you. I would be thrilled to pre-read something that isn't my own.****

****That's not all, folks, I plan to start another mass-crossover. But this one will be better thought out. Check it out on my profile, It's called 'War of the Worlds', and tell me what you think. (PLEASE! DO SO!) PLEASE!***

****Extra special thanks to Winter's sentinel for beta-reading. I appreciate it.****

ONI Station in orbit around Moon. March 6, 2553.

The last three days had been utterly confusing for the surviving Spartan 1's 2's and 3's. They had arrived at the station, and learned that they would be assimilated into a new generation of Spartans, the 4's. After being acclimated to their new roles as diplomatic bodyguards, peacekeepers, and glorified bogeymen, they were taken to special stations where they were given new GEN 2 MJOLNIR armor. Initially, each Spartan chose a base set of armor, and then was able to customize the different parts to their liking.

Carter walked back to his quarters. Since there were so few personnel on the station, each Spartan was given a room on the station. He sat down at his desk and began reviewing possible attachments for his base GEN 2 Commando armor. He barely recognized himself in the armor.

There was a knock at the door, and three other Spartans came in.

"Commander." Jorge said.

"Good to see you all again."

Jorge had chosen a modified version of the Venator armor, adapted for his size. Kat had chosen Locus armor and had already gotten to work modifying it, as evidenced by the lack of a left shoulder pauldron and knee guards. Jun had chosen Scout armor, just like he had for GEN 1, and had already put a pouch for spare Sniper rounds on his left shoulder in place of his pauldron.

Carter set down the datapad he had been reading and stood up.

"You guys know what you're going to be doing after this is finished?"

"We're all going to be training Spartan-4's on the Infinity." Kat answered.

"Great, now we get to deal with kids, and here I thought I would never get that honor."

"You won't. ONI only wants adult volunteers from the armed forces. You get the honor of picking the first recruits."

"Really? They say why?"

"Because you were the leader of NOBLE. Still are. The most successful Spartan fireteam." Jorge said.

"Send me the list."

As if on cue, his datapad pinged with a new message.

"We'll leave you to it. Colonel." Jun said.

"Waitâ€¦ Colonel?"

"Yeah. ONI gave you a promotion to Colonel for your actions. Probably just to get HIGHCOM off their backs." Kat explained.

"Figures."

The three left, and Carter picked up his datapad, entering the code to decrypt the message.

To: Colonel Carter A-259, NOBLE 1

_From: Brigadier General Urban Holland, NOBLE
ACTUAL_

Colonel,

The Office of Naval Intelligence has chosen you to select the first recruits for the SPARTAN-IV project, for your 'excellent leadership qualities and command of the battlefield'. They believe that you will make 'informed and dependable decisions'. I may have had a say in that.

For your action over the last 6 months, HIGHCOM has also given you a promotion to the rank of Colonel. You've earned it.

I've attached the list of those who have volunteered for the project. Good luck, Colonel.

You have my sincere condolences for the loss of your teammates. They were damn good soldiers, and I was honored to have commanded them.

Holland out.

Over the next 6 hours, the newly-appointed Colonel read over the

CSV's that were provided. Three stuck out from the rest:

ODST Captain Sarah Palmer

ODST Lieutenant Edward Buck

ODST Sergeant Michael 'Mickey' Crespo

All three had had plenty of experience fighting the Covenant, and Carter could vouch for Buck personally: he had fought alongside NOBLE and the Chief when they were trying to disable the bomb on the Cairo at the onset of the Covenant Invasion of Earth.

Palmer was a complete unknown, as was 'Mickey', though Carter had heard Buck talk about Mickey a few times, and assumed that he was a part of Buck's squad.

He read over their CSVs one more time:

Captain Sarah Palmer;

Career Marine and ODST. Served twelve tours of duty on eight worlds. Excellent physical prowess and innate leadership.

The rest of her CSV consisted of several of the battles she had participated in and her role in those battles: Reach, as a part of 105th ODST Division in the Battle of Viery, and in the Battle of Aszod, assisting James as he assaulted through to Sword Base, and later defending the drydock where the Pillar of Autumn received the Package.

The next was a little more intriguing.

Sergeant Michael Crespo;

Former Pelican Crew Chief. Has an aptitude for flying. Even after almost 5 years in the ODST's, still has not seen a planet glassed. Currently specializes in demolitions. Enlisted in the Marines as a mandatory requirement to leave foster care.

He had a less lengthy history in the UNSC, but still had a few high points: He had been on Earth during the Invasion in 2552, and had been on Reach during the early portions of the attack.

Why would they pull out an ODST, for Christ's sake? He's a valuable asset. Carter wondered.

After some lengthy consideration, he finally gave the green light for 22 out of the 25 volunteers to become Spartan-IV's.

I just, in a sense, gave birth to a whole new generation of super-soldiers. I should feel better, shouldn't I? Why don't I? He wondered.

The truth was, he expected it to be like his own training, or that of the II's. At least, what Jorge had told him of it. He didn't like it, or the fact that they may die in the augmentations.

Don't BS yourself! None of the III's died, so none of the IV's will either. You're being paranoid.

Must be the war finally catching up to me.

Fuck, I'm tired.

Carter suddenly realized that he hadn't slept in almost 4 months, his last time being on the medical station where he had been treated for his injuries sustained on Reach.

He took off his helmet, and removed his armor down to the undersuit. It was convenient for the Spartans to be able to snap the parts on whenever they needed them, and detach them when they needed to, mainly to get at injuries sustained to the actual operators themselves. He laid down on the bed across the room, and fell asleep almost instantly.

Carter shot up in his bed, drenched in sweat, and breathing very heavily, with the last words from his dream still echoing in his ears:

"We will return."

He got up and wiped his forehead, then checked his datapad. A new message was displayed.

We're going to the firing range to find some new weapons. Never know what we might find. Come down if you have the time.

A-266.

All Spartans signed messages with their service tags, to prevent anyone who didn't know it from knowing who had sent it. He also noticed that it was 0800, on March 7th.

So I slept for 10 hours. I can't get into that habit. He thought.

"Firing range sounds good." Carter said out loud.

As he began to replace the pieces of his armor, his thoughts drifted back to his dream:

There were billions of them. The Flood was everywhere. He could see them devouring entire colonies-worth of humans.

Seven figures stood in front of the Colonel. He suddenly looked around, and found himself in space overlooking the devastated colony of Reach, but still feeling like he was on solid ground. A bone-chillingly deep voice rang out.

"You think us defeated. You think us gone. You think wrong. We shall consume your entire species, and all others."

The figure in the center of the group stepped out of the shadows, revealing itself to be Carter, clad in his old Mk. 5 armor that he wore on Reach, but the armor was green in places, and the visor was a deep black.

"We are not a thing that you can comprehend, nor can you hope to defeat us. We lie in waiting, gathering our strength." The figure

said.

The six others stepped forward, manifesting themselves as the rest of NOBLE and the Master Chief, all showing the same aesthetic deformations as Carter's double.

"We will return." All seven of them said in unison.

(End)

Carter finished snapping the pieces of his armor back into place, and tucked his helmet under his shoulder as he left his room.

What is happening?

He shook his head to clear these thoughts and walked into the firing range, which was more like a full-fledged training ground.

The room was huge, easily the size of the rest of the station. The other members of NOBLE were situated around an armory, getting a feel for different weapons.

"Hey, you made it." Jun commented as Carter walked over.

"Wouldn't miss it."

"Been a while since we all justâ€¦ sat down." Jorge commented.

"Not all of us." Kat added.

"I know what you mean. I can't shake the feeling that they didn't die." Carter said.

"Well, I guess we can't do anything about it. Not until the spooks let us off this station anyway." Jun commented.

"I heard that we'll be put on the Infinity in about a month." Kat said.

"Heard, or hacked into secure terminals to find out?" Jorge asked.

"A little of both."

"Well, no sense just sitting around. Let's put this armor to the test." Carter said as he walked over to the control console.

He punched in a few commands, and the room transformed into a suburban cityscape, complete with buildings and rubble. Then he walked over to the armory and selected an M395 DMR and an M6H Magnum.

"Begin simulation!" He shouted.

Instantly, the team sprang into action. Kat swept the area with her MA5D AR, while Jun jumped onto one of the nearby rooftops to provide sniper support, and Jorge readied his M247H HMG.

"_Colonel, hostiles approaching from the southwest. Permission to engage_" Jun reported.

"Negative, Three. We'll get the drop on them."

"_Affirmative. Contacts are three Brute Captains leading a squad of Grunts_."

"Copy that. Jorge, take up position behind that parking barrier. Kat, take cover in that building, find a window to fire out of."

"On it." Jorge said.

"Will do."

Carter slid behind a virtual car and slotted his DMR through the window. The first 'Grunt' came around the corner and was shot through the head.

"Engage!"

Jorge mounted his MG on the barrier and blasted the rest of the patrol, taking down a Brute and a pair of Grunts before having to reload.

"_More behind us! Five Brutes, 3 Jackals, and ten Grunts, roughly_." Jun reported.

"Take out as many as you can. Jorge, go help him."

"On it, sir."

Four cracks rang through the air, and Carter knew that between three and four enemies had fallen at his back. Jun rarely missed.

The sharp staccato of AR fire rang through the landscape, and bullets rained down on the patrol in front of the Colonel. Two Grunts went down, and a Brute lost its shields. Carter snapped off a quick shot, hitting the Brute in the throat and sending it to the ground. A second shot silenced its screams.

"_Contacts neutralized-SHIT! Chieftains!_" Jun shouted.

"Hang on! Kat, can you handle these guys?"

"_A Brute and three Grunts? I'm insulted, Colonel. Even an ODS could handle them_."

"Forget I said anything, then."

Carter jumped out of his cover and ran to Jorge and Jun, who were both backpedalling from a pair of Hammer-swinging maniacs-uhâ€| Brutesâ€| Yeah, Brutes. He put an entire magazine of DMR rounds into one and it still didn't go down. The other was right on top of him. It swung its hammer at Carter's stomach, which he caught and diverted into the ground. They were both catapulted into the air by the force. Carter landed on the ground behind the car he had been hiding behind before.

They were that close the whole time? He thought.

He got up and unholstered his M6H Magnum. He unloaded the clip into

the Brute that he had fought before and it still didn't go down. So he threw a grenade. It finally went down.

"Done now, Colonel?" Jorge asked, walking up behind the virtual corpse.

"You could have helped."

"Didn't feel like it." Kat said.

"That's 'didn't feel like it, sir.'"

"Don't give us that BS, Colonel." Jun argued.

"Impressive work, Noble." A familiar voice said as the virtual battleground disappeared.

"Major Barnes. Good to see you again." Carter said, shaking the man's hand.

"You too, Commander."

"To you and the rest of the III's, it's Carter."

"Alright, then. Anyway, plans have changed: we're being deployed to the Infinity ASAP."

"Is it even completed?" Jorge asked.

"Most of it is, including the Spartan Deck. ONI wants us training the IV's as soon as we can. I guess that means now."

"Thanks. Get your gear, Noble. We're leaving."

"Finally." Jun said.

The next day, the Spartans left for the Infinity, and the facility was once again silent.

_August 9, 2554. UNSC Infinity. Spartan Deck. __**(Happy birthday to me!)**_

Carter watched his Spartan IV trainees engage in a mock assault. One side was clad in blue SPI armor, while the other was in red. The reds were supposed to enter the blue base and retrieve a flag, and then return it to their own base on the other side of the room, about three football fields away. A secondary objective for the reds was to eliminate the leader of the blues, sporting an outdated MJOLNIR Mk. 5 helmet.

The blues had set up a manned MG turret, and had a pair of snipers, all armed with stun rounds, of course. They also had a three man patrol, and had three inside the base guarding the flag and their leader. Carter thought their chances of successfully repelling the 'attack' were fairly even.

The reds advanced up in groups of two, smart, considering that there were ten of them. They headed for each of the two entrances to the base, with three teams waiting back to reinforce.

"How are they turning out, Colonel?" The ship's XO, Commander Thomas Lasky, asked as he walked up.

"They're good, considering that they've been training for only 5 months."

Lasky had personally acquainted himself with each of the Spartans that had come on the Infinity before it was complete.

"Any outstanding characters yet?"

"A few. There's one in that base, Alex B-107; he's a natural leader: Former ODSF squad leader, and before that, an MEU Commander."

"And the attackers?"

"The one with the gray marks, Alan B-084; he's a career marine as well, top marks in officer school, and the unofficial leader of Saffron squad, his team."

The reds had been seen, and a firefight had started. The blues had the advantage, as their gunner just rained stun rounds on the reds. That's when Carter realized what the reds were doing.

Those three teams weren't in reserve, they were the infiltration force, and the two other teams were a distraction. Clever, Alan.
Carter thought.

The diversion worked: the defenders were so focused on the two diversionary teams that they didn't notice the three other teams slip into the base through the vents.

"Nice tactics, reminds me of my time at Corbulo academy on Circinius IV, before it was attacked by the Covenant." Lasky commented, as he too realized what the reds were up to.

"I heard the stories, but I never knew that you were there."

"That was even before anyone knew what the Covenant was. My teammate, Sullivan, found classified footage of a squad of marines fighting alongside Insurrectionists against the Covenant, and a pair of Spartans helping them."

"Remember which ones?"

"The footage was from one of the Spartan's helmets, but I think the other was SPARTAN-104, Fred. The details are a little fuzzy, up until the invasion."

"What happened?"

Lasky chuckled a little.

"All the cadets were asleep when the alarms started going off. It was chaos. No one knew what was going on. We were waiting in line to get off the planet on an evac shuttle, and one of our squadmates, Dima, got impatient, and forced her way on the first transport. That one was shot down by a CCS-class cruiser."

"Harsh."

"That's not the worst part. By a long shot."

By now, the blues had caught wind of the reds plan and had reinforced the interior of the base.

"We ran, until we found my dorm room. We hid inside, and we heard this marine shooting at something. I poked my head out, and there was an Elite, stabbing the man with its sword. It cloaked and hunted us all through the academy, finally cornering us in the weapons room. The lockers were locked, and we couldn't open them, so we hid. I remember crouching behind the wall, trying so hard not to breathe too loudly, and also trying to find the Elite. It splashed a puddle of water next to us. My squad leader, Vickers, tried to distract it by throwing a fire extinguisher at it, but he was killed, too. Then the Elite found us. I remember staring into its helmeted face, and seeing it relish the fact that it had five humans terrified for their lives. Then it fell over, and there was another Spartan, holding a combat knife. He saved us all."

"Who was it? The Spartan?" Carter asked.

Lasky paused for a moment, and drew in a deep breath.

"It was the Chief."

"I'm sorry. It must have been hard to hear that he's dead."

"He's not. The Chief's a survivor, and so are all Spartans. We'll find them. I know it."

Lasky and Carter exchanged a salute and the XO returned to the Command deck.

The reds had been pushed out of the base, with only three survivors. One went down as a blue sniper hit his helmet, and the other two fell back to their base.

"That's enough! End simulation!" Carter shouted as he jumped down and joined the trainees.

"Number-084, step forward!"

He did so, and snapped a crisp salute as he did so.

"Sir!"

"Your tactics were solid. A diversion to allow you main force in is a dependable, but also predictable tactic against those with any experience on the battlefield. You won't always be facing trainees, so adapt that style, and you and your team will be great infiltrators."

"Thank you, sir! I'll do my best!"

"Another tip, you don't always have to have just two teams, with more experience leading, you'll be able to micro-manage any number of teams."

"Yes, sir!"

Alan stepped back into line.

"Number 107, step forward!"

He repeated what Alan had done.

"Sir!"

"You did well today. Your defenses were solid and you used the soldiers under your command effectively. But make sure for next time that you monitor all entryways into your base."

"Yes, sir!"

"Report to the war room. Commander B-320 will be teaching you all how to hack a secure terminal."

"Sir, yes sir!"

They all removed and stored their SPI armor and left for the war room.

Carter removed his helmet and leaned against a nearby bulkhead.

"Little more than you're used to, Colonel?"

Carter shot up and looked over to the source of the voice.

"Lieutenant Buck. Good to see you again."

"You too, Colonel."

The two Spartans exchanged a handshake and leaned up against the bulkhead again.

"Hard to believe it's been almost two years since I met you and the rest of Noble."

"Not all of it."

"I talked with Jorge and Kat. You're a hell of a leader, Carter. You know that?"

"I wouldn't go that far, LT."

"I would. You handled what happened on Installation 05 and Earth with efficiency that any soldier would aspire to. Most would have panicked with the Flood knocking on their helmets. You didn't. These trainees hold a great deal of respect towards you and all of NOBLE Team for that."

"Thanks. How are the rest of the Spartans holding up?" Carter said, referring to the surviving I's, II's, and III's.

"Johnsonâ€¦ well, he's Johnson, so he's pushing them as hard as regulations allow him to. I don't know about many of the II's, since they hate ODST's. The III's are holding up well, all nine of

you."

"It's a shame to the Spartan Corps that more didn't survive."

"Just goes to show you that even if we're super-soldiers, we're still human."

"Yeah."

"It's been good talking to you, Carter. Take care of yourself."

"You too, Buck."

Lieutenant Buck left, and once again, Carter was alone with his thoughts.

This is so different than what I expected. I thought this would be a tougher. That's okay, though. Just means that I have to push them a little harder.

October 17th, 2556. UNSC Infinity, Command Deck. 0900 Standard Military Time.

"Get on the horn to FLEETCOM, tell them what's happened." Captain Andrew Del Rio ordered.

"Yes, sir!"

"Colonel, assemble your team, you're going groundside."

"_Sir! Method of entry_" Carter asked over the comms.

"Hard-drop. 20 minutes."

When Carter arrived in the armory he found the rest of NOBLE assembled around a computer.

"Did I miss something?" Carter asked as he walked up behind them.

"Not much. What's down there that's so important, Colonel?"

"A Forerunner artifact. We're going to secure it, and the Infinity is going to tow it up to Ivanoff Research Station."

"Just us?" Jun asked.

"Probably the IV's will back us up."

"There are almost 3,000 of them. That's going to be a grand target for any Covenant forces that still hate us." Jorge pointed out.

"That's precisely why all of them are coming."

"Alright. When do we leave, and by what means?" Jun asked.

"13 minutes. Hard-drop."

"Copy that." Jorge said as they went to work assembling their

gear.

"This is the Captain. All Spartan personnel are to assemble gear and prep for hard-drop. Drop in 13 minutes. Del Rio out."

The Spartan deck became organized chaos: Spartans walked to and fro, assembling armor and weapons, then moving to check misc. gear, and finally assembling in the drop bay.

"Spartans: we are dropping onto this Halo, and securing a Forerunner artifact for the Infinity to take to Ivanoff Research station. Any questions?" Spartan IV Commander Sarah Palmer said.

"Any hostiles in the immediate area?" One IV asked.

"That's what we're going to find out."

"When do we drop?" Chief Warrant Officer Avery Johnson asked.

"Now. To your pods, ASAP."

The assembled Spartans clambered into their pods.

"_Spartans, we are green and very, VERY mean_" Captain Buck, Palmer's second-in-command, announced over the comms.

10 seconds later, roughly 3,000 drop pods exploded out of the bottom of the Infinity, heading for the ring, and the artifact that would come to be known as the Composer.

December 19, 2556. UNSC Infinity. Command Deck.

"What the hell are these?" Captain Del Rio said.

"Sir, these are coordinates. Slipspace coordinates." Commander Lasky told him.

"What's on the other side?"

"R&D says it might be another similar artifact, or a Forerunner world. Your guess is as good as mine."

"Roland, plot a course for these coordinates. We're going in. Lieutenant Faison, inform FLEETCOM of the situation."

"Yes, sir. Message away."

"Activate the Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Generators."

"Done, sir. All hands, brace for Slipspace jump."

The Infinity's Slipspace generators tore a hole in real-space, and the warship was gone.

March 4th, 2557. _UNSC Infinity, Spartan Deck._

"_NOBLE Team, report to the bridge_" The ship's AI, Roland announced over the intercom.

The four Spartans walked onto the bridge in full armor and

saluted.

"Spartan NOBLE Team reporting as ordered." Carter said.

"Over here, NOBLE." Lasky said.

They walked over, and caught the tail end of an emergency beacon.

"_Victor Zero Five dash Three dash Sierra Zero One-One-Seven_."

"Play it again, Roland." Lasky said.

"_Mayday, mayday, mayday. This is UNSC FFG-201 Forward Unto Dawn requesting immediate evac. Survivors aboard, prioritization code: Victor Zero Five dash Three dash Sierra Zero One-One-Seven_." A very calm female voice said.

"That'sâ€¦ Cortana." Jun said.

"I noticed that, too." Lasky added.

"You were right all those years ago, Commander." Carter said.

"Seems that way. We tracked the beacon into the planet."

"The planet is hollow?" Kat asked.

"Put bluntly, yes."

"Then we need to get inside and find them." Carter said.

"The Captain agrees. We're already going in."

The Infinity descended towards the Forerunner planet, and the biggest threat to humanity in almost four years.

****DONE! That's that! Next up, the four years spent on the Aft section of the Dawn, mainly just a few flashbacks to the Chief's adventures on Installation 04. Almost to H4! Just one. More. Chapter! OHâ€¦ I CAN'T WAIT! I gotta start writing that next chapter. I know that updates have been very sporadic, but I will try to get up to 2 chapters posted per week. That's the goal, anyway. But I have beenâ€¦ distracted. BY BOW SHOOTING! But for nowâ€¦****

****MASTER CHIEF! (#3 on the list!)****

32. Chapter 32

Chapter 32: Distant Thunder

****ACCESSING IMPERIAL RECORDS: OPENING DATA FILE: DOWNLOADING CONTENTS. ADDING RANDOM ADVERTISEMENTS. DATA CORRUPTION DETECTED. RECOMPILINGâ€¦ COMPLETE!****

****Good morning, Reclaimers! This installation is nearly complete! By my calculations, it will be ready to activate in approximately one month.****

****On a side note, anyone who's familiar with zipscool's A Razor's Edge, I may, I repeat, MAY, adopt the story. It was disbanded several months ago, and I have taken a real interest in it. Check it out, and tell me if you think I should. (I will not be putting any other books on hold for it. I will probably start in on that sometime in sometime next year, depending on how long my Halo-Mass Effect Crossover's first part takes.****

****Wish me luck as I try to tackle Halo 4 on Legendary. Holy shit, that's hard.****

****Again, big thanks to Winter's Sentinel for Betaing.****

UNSC Forward Unto Dawn, Cryo Bay.

_It's been 4 years since Halo was destroyed, and the Flood was erased from the galaxy. I've been sitting here for _4 years_ with nothing to do, except catalogue the Spartan's individual histories._

John is the only noteworthy one, though. He was taken at age 6 from Elysium City, Eridanus II, in the Eridanus system, in 2517. He was taken to Reach, where he was formally conscripted into the SPARTAN-II program. It was here that he met Samuel-034, and Kelly-084, who came to be his two best friends. During a survival exercise in the mountains of Reach, John-117 proved himself to be a capable leader, and became a squad leader for the trainees. In 2522, the Spartan candidates, all 75 of them, were augmented. Half of them died. John has always been the luckiest of the Spartans, and in my opinion, he is the best.

In 2525, just before the Harvest Invasion, John led a team into the heart of the Insurrectionist's base, and captured Rebel Colonel Robert Watts, the leader of the rebels. It was here that SPARTAN-117 received his first medal, a Purple Heart.

SPARTAN-117 was present for the Battle of Sigma Octanus Four in early 2552, as was James-005. It was here that the UNSC made first contact with the Covenant Huragok, Engineers, and Mgalekgolo, or Hunters. _It was here that SPARTAN-117 also discovered, unknowingly, the coordinates for Installation 04, Halo. He and his team detonated a HAVOC Tactical Nuclear Device inside the capital city, Cote d'Azur. But the Covenant still glassed the planet._

John was then recalled to Reach, along with the rest of the Spartans, for a top-secret mission, the express purpose for which I was created.

The mission was to disable and board a Covenant ship, take it over, and find the Covenant homeworld, which we still didn't know was a gigantic space city. Then, the Spartans were to capture a Prophet, and return to UNSC space, in the hopes that the Covenant would be willing to negotiate peace for their Prophet.

_Before they could get underway, however, the planet came under attack. There was an unsecured Navigation database, in complete violation of the Cole Protocol, if I may add, and John was sent with James and Linda-058, to secure it and its data, as it may have pointed to Earth, while the rest of the Spartans went planetside to defend the orbital defense generators. James was lost to space, but

apparently was saved by the _real_ NOBLE Six as the latter was falling from a CSO-class Supercarrier after NOBLE 5 detonated a Slipspace generator on it, and _Linda was critically wounded while covering John as he secured the NAV data. So in essence, John became the last Spartan-II that I knew of. Linda was placed in cryosleep on the Pillar of Autumn, and later resuscitated and pressed back into service._

Then came Halo, Installation 04. The Chief was in cryo sleep, and had to fight his way to the bridge after waking up in the middle of an invasion of the ship. He came to the bridge unharmed, and Captain Keyes gave him me to protect. In truth, though, we were supposed to protect each other. John has always been Dr. Halsey's favorite, and since I am essentially her brainchild, I feel the same way. So we escaped the Autumn on a lifeboat that crashed on the ring. Sadly, no survivors but us. We searched for a few minutes, until we found another lifeboat beacon and a team of marines, Sgt. Johnson among them. John helped them stay alive against Covenant raiding parties, and then got them onto a Pelican bound for Alpha Base, where the survivors were congregating. The Chief took a Warthog to find more survivors. After finding all three groups, we went to Alpha Base.

_I had already accessed the Covenant Battlenet and found that the entire surviving command crew of the _Autumn_ had been taken prisoner by the Covenant. They were being held on the _Truth and Reconciliation_, which I had disabled in orbit around the ring. The surviving marines organized a raid on the ship, with the sole intention of rescuing the Captain and the command crew. There was heavy resistance along the way to the ship, and also inside the ship, but we managed to rescue the crew._

_The Captain had overheard the guards talking about the ring, calling it 'Halo' and saying that it was some kind of superweapon. It was also here that John was informed of the survival of some of the members of Team Noble. He had mixed feelings about that. The Chief and I were given a new mission to find Halo's control center before the Covenant could. _

After we escaped from the ship, the Chief and I went to find the 'Silent Cartographer' a map of the ring. We assaulted the beach where the Cartographer was located, along with a contingent of marines. The Covenant blocked access to the Cartographer before we could get in, so we had to disable the security systems in place. Once that was accomplished, we returned and found the location of the control center. It was in a polar region of the ring, so we had to grab a Pelican ride there. Only, the coordinates pointed underground.

We fought our way to the Control Room, where John put me in the ring's systems. I learned about the Flood here, and that the Captain's mission to find a Covenant weapons cache was going to release them. I made John leave without me, furious that I had not seen it sooner.

_John went to the site alone, and found that the entire contingent of marines sent had been consumed by the Flood, save for Sgt. Johnson, who was unable to be assimilated due to his augmentations during Project ORION. He escaped, and found a squad of marines that was ordered to stay back and defend the entrance. They all made their way to a tower, where John first met 343 Guilty Spark, the Monitor of the

ring. _

He took John to a place called the Library, where the ring's Activation Index was hidden. Once they had found it, they came back to the Control Room. When the Monitor tried to activate the ring, I stopped him by claiming the Index. I also had to explain to John the true purpose of the ring: to kill the food source of the Flood. Spark turned on us then, and we had to eventually detonate the Autumn's fusion drive core to destroy the ring.

We drifted in space for a few days, eventually encountering a Pelican dropship and a Covenant Fleet. We found an ODST, Corporal Locklear, Johnson, a pilot, and an ONI operative onboard. We captured the Covenant's flagship, Ascendant Justice, and fled the system.

_We then went to Reach, although on a randomized course as per the Cole Protocol, there was an ulterior motive here: John wanted to find his Spartans. He did, all six of them that lived, and he also found Dr. Halsey. In orbit, I found the intact wreck of the UNSC Gettysburg, and linked the Ascendant Justice to it, draining the power from the Gettysburg's reactor to power the Ascendant Justice's weapons. When John and his team returned, we left on another random Slipspace course, but Dr. Halsey had brought a crystal that bent Slipspace into something else. _

During the battle above Reach, I had found that the Covenant had found the location of Earth, and was preparing a massive fleet to destroy it. We found the fleet, around a massive space station, Unyielding Hierophant, and destroyed the station, along with a good number of ships as well. We then returned to Earth in a Pelican dropship and warned the UNSC about this threat.

Waitâ€¦ the alarms! Whatâ€¦ Oh, no.

I need them. Now to wake them up.

33. Chapter 33

Chapter 33: Dawn

**WELCOME, GUEST! PLEASE SIGN IN TO CONTINUE. USERNAME: (REDACTED)
PASSWORD: (REDACTED) PLEASE INSERT 5 DOLLARS TO CONTINUE.
PROCESSINGâ€¦ WELCOME, RECLAIMER! YOU HAVE ONE UNREAD MESSAGE.
**

**FROM: ALPHAGUARDIAN. **

SUBJECT: SND CHAPTER 33.

From now on, I'm using the level names for the chapter names. Just thought I'd let you guys know. Also, expect updates to be tapered down to one a week, at least in theory. Lastly: I'll be posting up my Halo-Mass Effect crossover simultaneously with chapterâ€¦36, which corresponds to the level **_Infinity**_** on Halo 4. So there you go! Enjoy, meatbags- uhâ€¦ friends. (Smiles nervously at reader.)
****(Oh shit. Hope they didn't notice that. [Reassuring Statement: Of course not, Master. The meatbags are too busy reading to catch one little slip-up.] Shut up, you stupid droid.)**

UNSC Forward Unto Dawn. Cryo Bay. Unknown date, 2557. In orbit around unknown planet.

For 4 years, the gutted remains of the Dawn had floated lifelessly through space. Now its only occupants, the three Spartans, were woken up by their AI companion, who had watched over them the whole time.

"Wake up." She pleaded as they slowly came back from their long sleep.

"I need you."

To her left, a cryo pod swung open and Emile A-239 fell to the deck, removing his helmet just before throwing up the nutrient surfactants from the pods.

"I will never get used to quick-thaws." He commented between heaves.

Two other pod doors opened, and John S-117 and James S-005 stepped out, unaffected by the cryosleep.

"We still on the _Dawn_?" James asked.

"Yes." Cortana replied.

"Why did you wake us?" John asked.

"Intrusion alerts on multiple decks. Yank me and let's go."

John did so, and the three left the cryo bay. Unfortunately, four years in the cold vacuum of space does not do a weapon good, so the Spartans had to scavenge what they could.

"_Our best bet to find out who's boarding us is the observation deck; 4 floors up._" Cortana informed them

"Rescue team, maybe?" Emile pondered.

The hull rattled as what sounded like a boarding craft latched on.

"I wouldn't put much money on it, unless we happen to be in some crazy alternate universe." James said.

"How long were we out?" John asked Cortana.

"_4 years, 7 months, 10 days_."

"Someone should have found us by now." Emile commented.

"_No one knows where we are. If they did find us, it would be on accident_."

They reached the ops center, and whipped around as a terrible screeching filled the space. A wall of orange light ran through the room.

"What's that?!" John asked.

"_Sensor scan, high intensity, doesn't match any known patterns!_" Cortana reported.

"This day just gets creepier and creepier." Emile commented.

"How close are we to the observation deck?" John asked as they entered the elevator bay.

"_It's directly above us_" Cortana said.

She marked the elevator that would take them to the observation deck. The Chief latched onto the doors and began to pull.

"_Chief, be careful!_" Cortana began to warn as the doors groaned in protest.

He threw the doors the rest of the way open, and was blown out into the shaft by the force of the atmosphere venting.

"_Because some areas might have lost pressure!_" She finished.

"Right." He groaned as he began to haul himself up the shaft.

Emile and James jumped out into the shaft right behind the Chief, following him up and out.

"_I didn't realize that the ship had deteriorated so badly!_" Cortana said while they climbed up, having to jump out of the way of 'falling' debris.

The three Spartans hauled themselves out of the shaft, and through the mist came an Elite, of all things, wielding an Energy Sword and skulking towards them. John met its charge and wrestled it until he was able to throw it down the shaft.

"I thought we made nice with the split-lips?" Emile asked.

"_First of all, they're Sangheili, and second: a lot can happen in four years._" Cortana pointed out.

"He's probably not alone, be on guard." John said, raising his scavenged MA5D Assault Rifle and taking point.

"Really wish that you would have killed it _up here_. That way, I could take its sword." James said.

"Too bad. Let's go." Emile rebuked.

The three Spartans came to the Observation Deck, which was crawling with Covenant, though it was mainly Grunts, with only one Elite at the center console.

"I'll take the Elite. James: you go right. Emile: left. Grab an Assault Rifle on the way." John whispered.

The two merely nodded in acknowledgement, and they all went their separate ways. John sprinted up the ramp at the Elite, who was facing

away from him, completely silent even though he weighed $\hat{A}\frac{1}{2}$ ton. He unsheathed his combat knife and drove it down the back of its neck, making sure to clamp its mandibles shut so it didn't shout. Emile and James, once they saw John dispatch the Elite, opened up with their AR's, each killing three Grunts before having to reload. John joined in, raining lead down on the hapless little fucks. The room was clear in less than 20 seconds.

"_Nice work. The console up top should retract the blast shields so we can see what we're up against._" Cortana told them.

The Chief hit the command to open the blast shields.

"_The good news is that these Covenant aren't outfitted like standard military. It could be we just came across a rogue salvage ship._" Cortana told them.

The blast shields finished retracting, revealing at least 4 Covenant ships around the _Dawn_.

"_Orâ€| we might have stumbled into an entire Covenant fleet._" She said, fear creeping into her voice.

"Maybe they haven't recognized us." The Chief said.

Two Phantoms descended into view, and then took off towards the sides of the room.

"_That's one possibility. Landing craft, flanking us!_"

The two Phantoms extended docking tubes through the side windows of the _Dawn_, compromising the atmosphere inside. An Elite led a squad of Grunts out of each one. The Spartans decided to take on the Covenant one side at a time, so as to, in theory, minimize the risk of injuries. The left side was first.

The Spartans all opened fire with their AR's, downing the five Grunts and weakening the Elite's shields. The Elite roared in anger and charged at the Spartans as they reloaded, getting in way too close before they began to fire again. They brought it down as it lashed out with at Emile, its fist barely scraping his visor.

The Covenant on the right side had already begun to migrate all throughout the deck, and the Spartans quickly dealt with the Grunts, as usual, and then focused on the Elite. It roared in anger as it was hammered with bullets, and charged as its shields broke, aiming for James, as he was the closest. It slammed into him, knocking him to the ground, and then fell on top of him as it succumbed to its wounds.

"Really, guys?!"

He shoved the corpse off of him, and then got back up, noticing the obscene amount of hinge-head blood on his armor.

"We need to make like birds and get the flock out of here. And by that I mean 'we need to get off of this ship.'" James said.

"_First of all: Really, Sherlock? I never noticed. Second: we've got bigger problems. We've got a cruiser on an intercept course._"

Cortana replied.

"Do we still have weapons systems?" John asked.

"_Yes, but we'll need to fire them manually from the outer hull. You know, since the ship was torn in half._"

"Point us at the closest airlock."

"_There._"

A blue diamond appeared on the Spartan's HUD's, marking the airlocks.

When they found the airlock, James noticed a box on the ground.

"What's this?"

He picked it up and opened it. Inside there was a disc.

**Halo 4.**

"What the hell is 'Halo 4?'" Emile asked upon seeing the disc.

"_Nothing shows up in the database._" Cortana replied.

There was more writing on the disc.

Xbox 360.

343 Industries.

Microsoft Studios.

"Now I'm really confused. When we get back to Earth, I'm gonna find this. And this 'Xbox 360'." James said.

"Doesn't matter. Let's move." John cut in.

The three Spartans cycled through the airlock and went to the outer hull.

"_Uh... I'm sorry. Did I miss orbiting a Forerunner planet at some point?_" Cortana said pointing out a giant metal sphere in front of them.

"One thing at a time." The Chief replied.

There were a few Covenant on the outer hull, but nothing that three Spartans couldn't handle. The trio found the missile controls and activated them.

"Thar she blows!" James said.

The blast door opened, but the missile didn't fire.

"Fucking perfect! The damn blast door's jammed! We gotta clear it before the missile can fire!" Emile told them.

The Chief jumped out of the control booth and sprinted over to the blasy door. He kicked the jammed lock into place and the silo lit up in green.

"_You did it! Get back!" _ Cortana told him as the missile streaked out if the silo and towards the cruiser. It gutted the ship right in the center. The Spartans regrouped near the Chief and another orange light came out of the planet and scanned the trio.

"The Covenant weren't the ones scanning us." The Chief said as the beam retracted and the planet opened up.

"_Okay, so, NOW can we worry about the giant metal planet?!_" Cortana said as the ship was slowly sucked into the planet.

"Where are the closest escape pods?" James asked.

"_Aft vehicle bay. Painting the closest airlock. GO! The second we cross the dome's event horizon, it's atmosphere's going to tear us apart!_"

The three took off for the airlock as the ship drew closer to the planet. They started to wait as the airlock cycled them through, but Emile ripped the door open, abruptly finishing the compression of the room.

"No sense waiting for an airlock if the ship is going to be torn apart anyway."

They ran for the bay as the ship deteriorated further around them. On the way, they suddenly got the feeling of near weightlessness.

"_All but one of the gravity generators just went dark!_"

"Just keep us pointed at that vehicle bay." John said.

They found the bay, but when the door opened, the three were pulled forcefully into the room by the decompression. They all grabbed the nearby railing and held on for dear life.

"Fuck! Hang on!" Emile shouted.

"Why does shit always hit the fan so fast for us?!" James asked.

"Because we're Spartans: When we get called in, shit has already hit the fan!" Emile responded.

The railing gave way, and the Spartans were flung into space, unable to find the escape pods.

"_We're caught in the gravity well!_"

"Can you track the escape pods?!" The Chief asked.

"_Negative- LOOK OUT!_" Cortana yelled as giant pieces of debris hurled toward the Spartans. They deflected them with ease, but were separated in the chaos.

The Chief threw his hands in front of him to block an incoming piece of the _Dawn_, and when he looked back, another smacked into him, knocking him out.

****WELCOME TO HALO 4! THIS FANFICTION BROUGHT TO YOU BY GEICO (**Not Really)****. DID YOU KNOW THAT I HATE SOCIAL MEDIA WITH A FIERY PASSION THAT SHALL BURN FOR ALL OF ETERNITY?****** (I bet not. I bet not.)

****Godâ€¦** I need a break from this. I just got done with a 5 page paper for English class, and now I'm trying to do thisâ€¦ **FUCK**. I'll be taking a day or two to rest my hands, get the blood flowing again, and maybe play more ME3 and H4. But I'll probably get bored and start writing again. **Ahâ€¦** boredom. Well, for nowâ€¦******

****BYE!****

34. Chapter 34

Chapter 34: Requiem

****AN's:** If you've played H4, then you know that shit's gonna go down. If you haven't: go buy an Xbox 360 and H4 and play it, will ya?! **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!** On a sidebar: you know what bugs me a lot? When people call John ****_**Master Chief**_****, or ****_**Chief**_**** during a narrative, like "Chief jumped over the barricade". It just sounds wrong. Just thought I'd get that out in the open.******

****** I know that I said that my Halo-Mass Effect crossover would be going up at the same time as chapter 36, but I'm getting very impatient, so I'm posting it ASAP. Look for the prologue, like, now! Or maybe tomorrow. (That is, as soon as you finish reading this chapter!)******

****** That being said: is anyone here a good drawer? I want an original cover, but I can't draw for ****_**shit**_****. If anyone is interested, give me a PM. (Please do so. I don't want to have to find a pic on the interwebs. That just sucks.******

****** As you know, summer vacation is coming up. Does anybody know of any good books that I can read?******

****** I keep forgetting to publically thank my Betareader: Winter's Sentinel. As I said before, really appreciate it.******

Unknown Forerunner Planet surface. 2557.

When the _Dawn_, and most of the Covenant fleet, had entered the planet, the three Spartans: John, James, and Emile, had been separated. Now the Chief was lying in a pile of debris trying to get his personal bearings. He hauled himself out of the debris and inspected his armor. Finding nothing physically wrong, he had Cortana scan the suit's software for any damage.

"****We have asked you to give up your family, your children, your future.**_**"

He pulled her chip from his helmet and held it in front of him.

"Cortana? What's wrong?"

"It's nothing. It's the crash- I'm fine."

"Cortana?"

"I'm fine, Chief. Really."

"No, you're not."

Cortana 'sighed'.

"I was put into service 8 years ago."

"8 years?"

"AI's deteriorate after 7, Chief."

The legendary Spartan-II was rendered silent for a few moments.

"Halsey."

"Chiefâ€|"

"We need to get you back to Halsey."

"Chief, please."

"She made you. She can fix you."

"I won't recover from rampancy, Chief."

"We need to get back to Earth."

"Don't make a girl a promise you can't keep."

The Chief silently slid the chip back into his helmet and left the crash site.

"Can you find the others?"

"_Searchingâ€| Nothi- wait, got one. It's Emile. I'll mark his location for you._"

"Keep searching for James."

"_I will. And Chief?_"

"What?"

"Can you keep my rampancy a secret from them?"

"Of course. Why?"

"_I don't need all of you thinking I'm a liability._"

A blue diamond appeared on John's HUD, marking Emile's location. As he neared, he opened a comm channel to the III.

"Emile, it's the Chief. Do you read?"

"_Yeah. Got a huge piece of debris on top of me, though. Can you see it?_"

He looked at the diamond, and saw a piece of metal on top of the Spartan, topped off by none other than a Warthog, still conveniently on four wheels. The Chief and Cortana chuckled a bit.

"There's a Warthog on top of the debris."

"_You're shitting me, right?_"

"No. I'll drive it off."

He did just that: he jumped in the 'Hog, adding his own $\frac{1}{2}$ ton heft to the weight on Emile, and drove it off of the metal. As he did, the metal was thrown clear by the III, who promptly jumped in the side seat.

"Don't do that again. Next time, just push the damn thing off."

"Fine." The Chief said as he floored the gas, speeding off towards a new diamond on his HUD.

As they traveled, a comm line opened, but was filled with static.

"Cortana?" John asked.

"_Faint transmission on the high-band_"

"Covenant?" Emile asked.

"_I don't think so: the pattern's different_. I'll try to pin it down._"

The pair kept driving, nearing the marker and their comrade.

"James, can you hear me? It's Emile."

"_Yeah._" There was a noise on the other end that sounded like plasma fire. "_I'm pinned down by Covenant, though. Where are you?_"

The Warthog pulled up behind James, and Emile jumped on the gun, firing on the aliens before they knew what was going on.

"Right here."

"Could've been here 5 minutes ago, guys."

"5 minutes ago this Warthog was sitting on top of Emile." John said.

"No shit? That's priceless. You should have gotten a picture."

"Shut up and man the gun." Emile said, retaking the side seat as James hopped up on the gun.

"Drive, Chief."

The Warthog took off in what the Chief thought was the direction of a Covenant ship that they could steal for a ride back to Earth. The 'Hog was wrecked before they got too much farther, and so the trio found their way to a citadel-like structure on foot.

"Mysterious. We should investigate." James said.

They fought their way to the top, killing quite a few Grunts, a few Jackals, and only 4 Elites.

"Hah. That was too- FUCK!" Emile shouted as a plasma sword literally came out of nowhere and almost took his head off.

The Elite Zealot decloaked and roared a challenge at the three Demons as it charged them. James accepted its challenge and ran at it, unsheathing his combat knife as he did so. The Spartan slid between the Zealot's legs, coming up behind the Covenant warrior and burying his knife in its neck.

"Hey, the split-lip dropped his camo plug. Dibs." Emile said, attaching it to his back.

Inside the structure, they found only one room. It was massive, with metal pillars rising and falling with every step.

"_There's a console in the back of the room._" Cortana told them as a blue diamond appeared in their HUD's.

The Chief put Cortana's data chip into the console.

"What is it?" The Chief asked.

"It's a localized site cartographer. 'In service of Forerunner Shield World designate Requiem'."

"Requiem? At least we know where we are."

The display lit up with a red symbol and then shut down.

"Hmâ€|"

"What was that?"

"The system kicked me out and reset itself. I'm detecting power fluctuations in several places. I'll put them up for you."

"I'll handle this. You two stay here and make sure the Covenant don't get to the Cartographer."

"Got it, Chief."

John set off for the first fluctuation, on the 'right' side of the room in respect to the Cartographer. He activated the light bridge to the core, and then reset the core. As he did so, his shields went down, and The Chief instantly had his MA5D up and scanning for targets.

"_It's alright. That beam is actually a Ferro-electric data pulse_.
_You're shields are just cycling in response to the chamber's
charge._" Cortana told him.

The Chief lowered his rifle and set off for the other
core.

"_Covenant. Coming through the entrance. Watch yourself, Chief._"

He looked over and confirmed what Emile saw: A Covenant squad, trying
to get access to the Cartographer.

"Find defensible positions, I'm almost done."

The Chief pulled out his Magnum and fired a few times, hitting three
Grunts in the head. He found the core and activated it, and then
returned to the Cartographer.

"Nice timing, Chief. Those Elites are still trying to get through us,
but they keep retreating to regroup." Emile told him.

"Give me your shotgun."

"You're kidding, right?"

"No."

"Fine. Here."

Emile gave John his shotgun, and the Chief charged at the Elites,
pumping the leader full of lead. The other two opened fire as the
familiar adrenaline rush flooded John's body.

(Spartan Time)

The plasma bolts slowed to a crawl, and the Elite's roars became
slurred and distorted. The Chief dodged to the side and fired a shot
of his own, blowing the Elite's head off, and startling its
companion. John swiveled, racked the shotgun, and fired again,
blowing a fist-sized hole in its stomach. He tossed the shotgun into
the air, caught the barrel, and used the stock as a blunt object with
which to crush the alien's skull with a bone-shattering
baseball-style smack.

As it fell over, dead, the Chief took a deep breath, and the
adrenaline rush subsided. The Chief walked back to the cartographer,
tossing Emile's shotgun back to him as he went, and stopped dead just
as he reached it.

"_Chief! Signal! Listen!_" Cortana told him.

The transmission was filled with static, but he could make out a few
words.

"~~~~~ _Infinity_~~~~~ _Planet~~~~~ Forward Unto Dawn._"

"Is that the same signal as before?"

"_Yes! Mayday, mayday, mayday! UNSC AI Cortana to Infinity, please

respond. No response, but from the strength of that signal, the Infinity has to be close._"

"We could use the Cartographer to pinpoint the ship's location, couldn't we?" James asked.

"_It's possible. Put me in the system, let me try._"

The Chief removed her data chip from his helmet and inserted it into the console. As she tried to find the source, markers on the planet's surface kept appearing and disappearing at a blinding rate.

"_The signal doesn't want to triangulate._"

The markers stopped at Requiem's core.

"That can't be right. Scan again." John told the AI.

"_We made it through one layer of the planet. It's not crazy to think that someone else made it further than us._"

"Now here's the million dollar question: How the hell do we get there?" Emile asked.

"_There's a transit node nearby that can link us to the planet's core._"

"Let's not waste any time. We have to find _Infinity_ and go home."

"_Pull me, Chief._"

John grabbed Cortana's chip and replaced it in his helmet, and the trio left the Cartographer, and found a small room with four armor plugs, all the same. James and John both grabbed one and activated them, and a blue shield appeared on their left arms.

"Hardlight shields. Nice." James commented.

"Cortana, what do you know about _Infinity?_" John asked.

"_Not much. She was supposed to be massive, but the project was only in prototype when we left._"

They left the room after getting acquainted with the new abilities, and found themselves on a platform overlooking a bridge with lots of Covenant forces on it.

The trio took potshots at the Covenant nearest them, killing three Grunts and a Jackal before the rest fled the scene. Emile, always the tip of the spear, jumped down and engaged the rest, while the Chief and James took the elevator at the edge of the platform.

"_Emile, would it have killed you to use the elevator?_" Cortana asked Emile.

"Yes. It would have taken too long to get down here."

The Chief just shook his head and took point as they cleared the bridge.

"I'll steal that Banshee and give you guys some cover." James said, indicating to a Banshee that some unfortunate Elite had died trying to get to.

The II hijacked the Banshee and rained absolute hell down on the Covenant on the end of the bridge. Plasma bolts and fuel rods slammed into the aliens, causing them to scatter and be easy targets for the Chief and Emile. When all was said and done, The Banshee had gone up in flames after James had fragged it, and the trio left the bridge behind them.

They entered a courtyard in front of a large tower that held the Terminus that they would use to warp to the planet's core. It was guarded by quite a few Covenant, including three Ghosts.

"Wait. Over there. Rocket Launchers!" Emile said, indicating to a pile of UNSC supply crates which, sure enough, had a pair of Rocket Launchers lying around it.

"Good eye. Grab one and kill those Ghosts. We'll cover you." John said.

Emile took off for the crates, and James and the Chief engaged the infantry in the courtyard. Emile had obtained the Launcher and used both rockets to destroy one of the Ghosts, while the other two spun around and fired at him as he ran to another spot to reload and fire again. He slammed the twin rockets into the launcher and fired again, taking out the other Ghosts with lethal precision.

"Haul ass to the Terminus! Go!" James yelled as he wrestled with the last Elite in hand-to-hand combat.

Emile ran at the Elite and pulled out his kukri, jumping onto the warrior's back and plunging his knife into its skull. James threw the corpse off of him as the III jumped off.

The pair followed John's trail of blood and body parts to the entrance. He was waiting for them inside the entrance to the tower.

"_We're about to have our hands full. The Elites just issued a general order: they're moving all ground troops to secure the tower entrance above us._"

"Shitâ€¦!" Emile said.

"Come on." John said, raising his AR and taking point.

The three Spartans jogged up to the next level, where they quickly killed a squad of four Grunts and were blindsided by a Sword-wielding Elite **(*Cough Cough Maniac Cough Cough*)** The Elite took a swing at John, which he dodged, and was rewarded with an augmented punch in the split-jaw, which shattered it and allowed James to kill it with a swift stab in the neck with his knife.

They fought to an elevator that would take them to the top of the tower, only to find a Hunter pair in combat with a few Forerunner Sentinels.

"Wait. Let them kill the Hunters. Save some ammo." John said.

"Fine." Emile said, obviously itching to kill something.

The Sentinels killed one before the other got in a lucky shot and killed all four Sentinels.

"Go!" John said, stepping out of cover and raining bullets down on the Hunter's exposed back.

James and Emile followed suit, and they took down the Hunter with only minor problems.

"_The Terminus is inside. Go!_" Cortana told them.

They ran into the elevator and activated it.

"_I've cleared up another transmission from Infinity._"

"~~~~~_artifact~~~~~_"

"Sounded like he said 'artifact'." John commented.

"_Maybe it's linked to whatever the Covenant are so interested in._"

The elevator came to the top, and the three walked to the console in the center of the room.

"_Put me in the system, Chief._"

He did so, and the AI began to plot a course to the _Infinity_.

"According to the cathedral, this Terminus is just one node of a larger transit grid that spans the entire planetâ€|" Cortana's voice trailed off.

"What?" Emile asked.

"When I tried to access the outlet closest to _Infinity's_ transmissions, the system responded with this."

A Forerunner symbol appeared in front of the AI's avatar.

"Isn't that the symbol for 'Reclaimer'?" James asked.

"Itâ€| it is. How did you know?" Cortana asked.

"I didn't, it just seemed right."

"Reclaimersâ€| Humanity. That's got to be _Infinity._" John concluded.

"Could you get us to those coordinates?" Emile asked.

"I'll try."

As she opened a portal, a large sound of activation of hardware resounded in the room. The three Spartans all raised their weapons and whipped around, seeing metal pillars rise up in the room.

"Chiefâ€¦ I'm picking up unknown energy signatures."

"Where?"

"Right here!"

As she said this, several robot-like figures, lit up in blue, warped into the room. They each growled at the Spartans, prompting Emile to tense up his grip on his shotgun.

"Uhâ€¦ Cortana? Now would be a good time to open that portal." James told the AI.

Just then, a portal appeared behind them.

"What theâ€¦ Spartans! Into the portal!"

John grabbed Cortana's data chip and returned it to his helmet as one of the creatures roared at the Spartans and teleported away. The three were transfixed in awe at this ability.

"Go! Into the portal! NOW!" Cortana practically screamed at them.

They all snapped out of it and jumped into the portal, leaving the robots behind them.

"_They escaped. Find them, and destroy them before they awaken the Disgraced One._" One of the creatures said as they warped away to find the humans.

Whew! That's done! Now on to the pylons, which will take a bit less time than you may think. So for nowâ€¦

** LATER, ALLIGATAH!**

35. Chapter 35

Chapter 35: Forerunner

AN's: Did you check out my new story yet? If not, do so. It's really good, or so I think. That one will be updated much more once I finish this story up, but until then, expect an update about once a week, or so. But for now, enjoy this, Chapter 35: Forerunner.

Forerunner Shield World Requiem. Planetary core.

The three Spartans exited the portal into Requiems core and took in their surroundings.

"Okay, I'm gonna say it: what the fuck were those things?" James said.

"_Some sort of advanced defense AI's. Related to the Sentinels, I'd guess, but it's hard to say without a closer look._" Cortana answered.

"Well, I'm not getting anywhere near those things, except to pump them full of shotgun shells." Emile commented.

"Shut it, and keep an eye out for them. Never know when they'll pop up again." John said as he found a console to insert Cortana into.

"Uhâ€¦ Am I blind or something? Where the hell is _Infinity?_" Emile asked.

"Emile, are you sure you're not just an ODS in Spartan armor?" James asked.

"Yeah. I'm sure. Why?"

"Because you bitch way too much to be a real Spartan. Only ODS's bitch as much as you do."

"That's offensive, comparing a Spartan-III to an ODS."

"No, it's _accurate_." James rebuked.

The Chief just sighed and kept looking around for _Infinity_.

"This is Requiem's core, all right. But _Infinity_ is definitely not here." Cortana said.

"Then where is the signal coming from?" James asked.

"That satellite in the center is amplifying the ship's broadcasts like a relay."

"Maybe we can use it to respond." Emile said.

"Perhaps. Those beams coming off of it are creating the interference we've been experiencing. We'll have to take them out to contact _Infinity._"

"We'll split up: I'll take the first pylon. You two take the second." John said.

"Remember the last time we split up? I got crushed by a Warthog." Emile said.

"Come on, ya glorified Helljumper, let's get going. Just don't get crushed this time." James said, heading for a portal on their right.

Emile followed him, and the two were teleported to a small corridor leading out to the 'surface'.

"Creepy." James said.

"Just shut up and keep looking for those robots."

"Fine."

James scanned around again and shrugged his shoulders.

"Noth-SHIT!"

One of the robots pounced on him and threw the II to the ground as it stood over him. It opened its helmet for a brief moment before snapping it shut. It got off of him and helped the Spartan up.

"What the fuck?!" Emile said.

"**Youâ€|Keeperâ€|Follow.**" The creature said to James.

"Uhâ€| okay?"

"Cortana? One of those robots from the Terminus just ambushed us and then became friendly in the span of about two seconds.

"_They're called Promethean Knights. And they must have seen something in him that we don't._"

"Soâ€| we've got robot friends now?"

"_You do. They hate me._" The Chief said.

"_They do._" Cortana agreed.

"Well, great."

"_Just get that pylon down. We'll deal with our new friend later._" John said.

The two Spartans followed the Knight to the pylon, and along the way were confronted by more Knights, all of whom either let the humans pass, or were eviscerated by the friendly Knight's hardlight shotgun.

"**There. Release the energy.**"

James walked over to the beam console and pulled on a handle attached to it, and then slammed it back down in, disabling the beam.

"Pylon's down, Chief. How are you doing?"

"_Just aboutâ€| there. Shield's disabled. We'll meet up back at the satellite._"

"**I shall open a portal for you, Keeper.**" The Knight said as it did so.

The two Spartans stepped through and left the Knight.

"_The humansâ€| One of them is a Keeper. Do not attack them._ It relayed to the other Knights.

The Spartans met back on the satellite and headed out to contact _Infinity_. All throughout the satellite, the Prometheans slaughtered

the Covenant forces that had come to the core, but left the Spartans alone, even going out of their way to save John when he was tackled by an Elite. They found a pair of pillars near the edge of the platform they were on.

"_The pillars! Grab the pillars so that we can contact Infinity!_" Cortana told the Chief.

He did, and Emile and James instantly fell in behind him, covering his back.

"_Infinity,_ this is Sierra-117 of the UNSC _Forward Unto Dawn_. Do you copy?"

The satellite echoed his voice, but distorted it as well.

"_Infinity_! Do you read?"

The satellite began to rise into the air, and the Covenant and Promethean forces below them stopped fighting.

"_Chiefâ€| Chief, let go of the contacts._" Cortana told him.

He did and grabbed his MA5D off of his back.

"Find us an exit."

"_Don't waste time on my account_!"

The three Spartans vaulted over a low wall on their left and hid below it as the satellite pulsed, releasing a sonic wave. They heard a slow whirring, indicating that something was coming out of the satellite. John peered over and saw a humanoid figure kneeling on a small platform. It stood up and armor assembled around it. John snapped back down and stayed there.

"So fades the great harvest of my betrayal."

It waved its hand around to the Knights in the room, and they all turned from their normal blue tint to an orange tint.

"Didact!" One of the Elites said, bowing to the figure.

"Even these beasts recognized what you were oblivious to, humans. Your nobility has blinded you as ever." The 'Didact' continued.

The three Spartans came out from their hiding spot and leveled their weapons at the Didact. He reached out and grabbed them with telekinetic powers, but only Emile and John were lifted.

"Hmâ€| You are not affected. Only those with Forerunner blood are immune to telekinetics. Perhaps my guardians were right to bring you here." He said, speaking to James.

James stood rooted in place, DMR still aimed at the figure.

"But if you have not mastered even these primitive creatures, half-brother, then you have not yet attained the Mantle."

The Didact threw his hand forward, and Emile and John were thrown back towards James. He jumped up onto the platform in front of him and walked closer to the Didact.

"You may have Forerunner blood, human. But you are a mere hybrid, bred out of necessity in order to repopulate the galaxy. You have abilities that remain untapped and shall remain that way until you accept your lineage. You are an embarrassment to your ancestors. This tomb is now yours." The Didact continued.

The Didact disappeared into the satellite and James went to help John and Emile.

"_Slipspace rupture! MOVE!_" Cortana yelled.

The three Spartans took off for cover as the Didact's ship jumped to slipspace.

John couldn't feel any part of his body for a few seconds after he came to, and then the pain set in. It reminded him of a lesson that his trainer, Chief Petty Officer Mendez, had taught the Spartan-II's: _Pain is good. It tells you you're alive._

"_Get up! The core is falling apart!_" Cortana yelled at him.

The Chief slowly hauled himself to his feet and found James already up and helping Emile.

"Chief! You alright?" James asked.

"Yeah. Peachy." He groaned.

"_Come on! Let's go!_" Cortana said.

"There! Ghosts." Emile said, pointing to the 4 Covenant scouting vehicles.

The Spartans activated three of them and sped off away from the core.

"_Hang on, I'm going to divert power from your shields to overclock the Ghost's boost function._" Cortana told them.

Their shields went down, and when they boosted, the Ghost easily pulled double the normal boost speed. It made escaping the core that much easier.

"_There! A portal to the surface!_"

The three gunned it into the portal, and came out near a sheer cliff.

"_Whoa, cowboys!_"

"Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck!" James shouted as he tried to stop the speeding Ghost.

He jumped off, as did the other two, and slid to the very edge of the cliff. Emile was not so lucky. He fell over, but the Chief caught him before he could fall very far down. James lent him a hand, and the

two pulled the III up and over.

"Shit. I just saw my life flash before my eyes. There were a lot of dead aliens. And a few humans." He said between gasps of breath.

"_Guys! There!_" Cortana said, marking a cloud in the sky.

Said cloud sparked for a few seconds, and then the bow of a distinctly UNSC ship plowed through.

"_Incoming transmission._"

"_Mayday, mayday! This is the captain of the UNSC _Infinity._ Unknown entity is seizing control of our ship; we're without power, and on a collision course with an unknown Forerunner planet._"

Cortana had said that the ship was huge, but that was a major understatement.

"Holy FUCK! That thing is HUGE!" James said.

"_I did say it was massive._" Cortana told him.

"You didn't say it was_ that big_! That thing could probably hold the _Dawn_ and still have room for the _Pillar of Autumn!_"

"_Actually, it could. Not the _Autumn, _But certainly the _Dawn._"

"Track its descent." John told Cortana.

"_On it. Projected impact point is 77.8 kilometers from here._" She said as the _Infinity _roared overhead.

"Ohâ€¦| shit. Behind us!" James shouted as a wave of pressure washed over the Spartans.

They turned around and shouldered their weapons, but lowered them when they saw what was behind them: the Didact's satellite, and it was pretty big. Nowhere near as big as _Infinity_, but about the size of the _Dawn_. It scanned the landscape with that distinctly Forerunner scanner, and then took off for the _Infinity_.

"_We know where he's headed._"

The Spartans started walking.

"Same place we are." John said as he checked his MA5D.

"This walk will just take a minute." James said, voicing Emile's concern.

"Then this is gonna be a long fucking minute." Emile shot back.

****AN's:** I'm going to change it up a little and tell this chapter from the perspective of the ****_**Infinity**_**** as it crashes onto the surface of Requiem, and during the events of the level Infinity. Hope you enjoy!**

****** Sorry for the lag in updates. I've been writing about a billion different fanfics, and I'm really worried about ANB, seeing as it's very new, and I've got a long way to go. I also have a huge writer's block.**

UNSC Infinity bridge. Descending towards unknown Forerunner planet.

"Captain! Impact in twenty seconds!" One of the bridge officers told Del Rio.

He activated the ship-wide intercom.

"Brace for impact!"

The ship plowed into the ground with enough force to shake the whole planet.

"Damage assessment!" Del Rio asked his operations officer.

"Shields are down, and all MAC guns are down and recharging. Minor hull breaches on deck 1, but the Huragok are repairing them as we speak."

"Excellent. Bring the ship up to combat alert Alpha. Ready ground teams to repel any hostiles that may attempt to board the ship."

"Yes, sir."

"Get Commander Lasky and Colonel A-259 to the CIC immediately."

"Messages away."

"Lieutenant Martin, you have the bridge."

"Yes, sir."

Del Rio walked to the CIC and found the Spartan Colonel and his XO waiting.

"Gentlemen. You're going on a scouting run to get a look at the terrain for possible deployments. _Infinity_'s shields and primary drive systems are down, so we cannot provide you with any cover, so stay sharp."

"_Captain! We've got inbound hostiles! And lots of them!_ _Ground teams are getting overwhelmed!_"

"Get to it, Commander. Colonel, get Noble Team to the hangar. You leave in 5. Good luck."

"Yes, sir."

The Commander and the Colonel left the CIC to prepare for their mission.

Infinity Spartan Deck.

"What!? We're leaving?" Kat exclaimed upon hearing the news.

"Yes. Let's move. No time to waste."

The team grabbed their weapons and left for the hangar. They found Commander Lasky waiting with a few other Spartans.

"Colonel. Spartans S-084, S-056, and S-104 reporting as ordered, sir."

"Any others, Commander?" Carter asked Lasky.

"Two more already in the bird. Let's go."

The 8 Spartans embarked the Pelican alongside the XO, and they took off. The two other Spartans were IV's, as evidenced from their Recruit armor sets. One was visibly nervous about leaving.

"Hey, don't sweat it, Rookie. Gunny and them'll kill a few for us."

The one called 'Rookie' stayed silent.

"He usually like this?" Carter asked.

"Yeah. He's always been the silent one. Name's Miles, but call me Dutch."

"I know you. Buck talked about you and your squad."

"Gunny spread the word, huh?"

"It's been a few months, but yes."

"_Coming in on the DZ in 5, Spartans. Work for it._" The pilot said.

The bay door opened and the team piled out, scanning the area with raised weapons.

"Clear!"

"Clear!"

"Clear!"

"Cl-SHIT!" Dutch yelled as he was blindsided by a large robot.

"Contacts! More of them phasing in!"

"Engage! Engage!" Carter yelled as he punched one in the face and stabbed it with his knife.

The team fanned out, trying to get away from the constructs, but it was no use, as they just warped closer and attacked again. Dutch was having the hardest time, as he couldn't get a good enough shot with his Spartan Laser.

"_Hang on! Let me swing her around!_"

The Pelican spun around and opened up on the constructs with its 40mm chaingun, obliterating the robots before they could blink. Just after Lasky jumped out, the dropship blew up as a huge satellite flew over them and shot it with a laser.

"Damnit! We gotta find shelter!" Jorge said.

"Let's move!" Carter ordered as he took off.

They all kept up, even Lasky, which was surprising, as he wasn't a Spartan. They found a small structure and entered.

"Kat, try and get comms up with _Infinity_." Carter told her.

"On it, Colonel."

"The rest of us will keep watch, and make sure that none of those things get the jump on us."

"Commander Lasky, I can get a wide range frequency, but that's about it for now."

"I'll take it."

He walked over and began transmitting.

"This is Lasky to UNSC _Infinity_. We're up to our necks in bad guys down here. Does anyone read?"

"~~~117~~~_Forward Unto~~~on station, ready~~~~._"

"Kat, can you clear it up?" Carter asked.

"No."

"Waitâ€¦ sounded like he said '_Forward Unto Dawn_'." Jun said.

"You'reâ€¦ Oh my God." Carter said.

Carter ran to the radio and picked up the transceiver.

"Chief! Chief, if you can hear me, this is Noble One. Do you read?"

Silence.

"Lost the signal." Kat reported.

"Damnit!"

He stood up, retrieved his DMR, and walked towards the door.

"Where are you going?" Lasky asked him.

He stepped out of the door and turned back.

"To find the rest of my team."

The doors closed behind him, and the III was on his own. He walked down the path back to the forest floor and encountered a pair of the robot big robots accompanied by 3 dog-like robots. He pulled up his DMR and shot the nearest dog in the face. It blew up in a shower of orange sparks and one of the big robots teleported away, only to reappear right in front of the Spartan. Carter leaped back as a new wave of adrenaline flooded his system.

(Spartan Time)

The robot's right arm bent back as it prepared to swing its sword at him, but Carter pulled out his combat knife and cut the arm off at its elbow. He flipped the blade around and cut its head off, and whirled around, slicing into one of the dogs that had leapt at him. As it recoiled, the Spartan buried the knife handle deep into the robot dog, killing it. He pulled the knife out, twirling the blade around once again and throwing it into the last dog.

As the adrenaline rush subsided, he walked over to the dying robot dog, planted his boot on its face, and yanked his knife out of its eye, smashing its head in the process. He grabbed his DMR from his left hand and fired one-handed at the last big robot, which recoiled but held firm, as it had shields. A curved knife emerged from its neck, puncturing its shields, and it fell over dead, with a not-so dead Spartan III standing over it.

"Commander." Emile said, saluting.

"Good to see you in one piece, Emile, but it's 'Colonel' now."

"That's quite the jump. Chief, I found the source of the noise. Get over here, like, last week."

"_On our way._"

"Anything big happen since we've been gone?" Emile asked.

"There's a new generation of Spartans, IV's. The surviving I's, II's, and III's trained them. That ship you saw has been our home for the past 4 years."

"Nice suit, sir. That 5th Avenue? You been shopping without us?" James asked as he and the Chief emerged from the brush behind Emile.

"Where's the rest of the team?" The Chief asked.

"Back that way, when we got your signal, I came alone to find you."

"You know, for a Spartan team leader, you sure do some dumb shit sometimes. Going up against Prometheans, _alone_? You're nuts. Sir." James said.

"Prometheans? The robots?"

"_Advanced Forerunner defense AI's, to be precise. The big ones are Promethean Knights_." Cortana chimed in.

"Thanks for the tip. It's fitting of them."

"Let's go find Lasky." John said.

Carter took point and led them back to the structure. Outside were a few weapons and an IFF tag.

"They locked the door. Grab any ammo you need. Commander, it's Carter. I have the package. It's safe."

The door opened, revealing 6 other Spartans on the other side of the door. They all had their weapons raised, but lowered them when they saw Emile, James, and John. Lasky walked out and extended his hand to John.

"I'm afraid I have to give you an IOU on that welcome home party. Tom Lasky. First officer of the _Infinity_. Never thought I'd see you again."

John shook his hand as Emile and James saluted out of habit.

"At ease, Noble. It's good to see you two again as well."

"We've met, sir?" James asked.

"On Reach."

"Ah, yes."

They all heard some static from the radio and a voice come over. They all ran over.

"Commander! Radio's hot!" Kat yelled to Lasky.

"_Respond to Commâ€¦ on what frequency? What frequency, damnit!?!_"

"_Infinity_, this is Commander Lasky. Pelican recon teams are down. Repeat. All birds are down. We've got numerous causalities and require immediate assistance. Over."

"_Finally. Did you get the coordinates to that gravity well?_"

"Yes, sir. But we need a way out of here."

"_Make it happen._"

"Commander, we'll never get the wounded out on foot." Jorge said.

"I hope it's not too soon to ask a favor, Chief. I don't suppose you're any good at clearing LZ's?" Lasky asked.

"On occasion. We'll send out an all-clear once the area's clear." John responded, walking towards the other entrance with James and

Emile in tow. The rest of Noble Team joined them, and they all left.

"_A topographical scan of the area shows a break in the foliage north of here. Should be large enough to bring in a dropship._" Cortana told them.

"Hey, James? What's with the exhaust vents on your back?" Jun asked him.

"Huh?" He asked, craning his neck to see them.

"_Oh, sorry. I integrated that thruster pack you took from an Elite Ranger into your armor._" Cortana told him.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"_I forgot._"

"Bull."

"_No really. It slipped my mind._"

"Uh-huh."

The team entered a small clearing where three Knights and their flying buddies, plus a few robot dogs, were scouting for humans. Carter immediately snapped up his DMR and blasted the dogs, while the Dawn crew attacked the Knights, and the rest of the team killed the flying bastards. The whole fight was done in about a minute.

"_Chief, it's Lasky. We've got reports of friendlies pinned down near your location. Can you assist?_"

"_Commander, this is Cortana. We're on our way._"

"Staggered formation, Noble. James, Jorge, move up first. Kat, Emile, you're next. Jun, you and the Chief are with me, on our six. Go." Carter instructed.

James and Jorge left the group and moved into the thicket. Upon seeing no targets, they signaled that it was clear, so Emile and Kat moved up behind them. That's when the Knights came. 2 of them ambushed the group of 4, so the rest of the team sprang into action and killed them with lethal efficiency.

"Let's try all going together, okay?" James asked.

"Yeah, let's try that." Carter said, taking point.

He led them along a small path that led to another clearing, a bit bigger than the last, with 4 marines being attacked by three Knights. The Chief instantly broke formation and beat down one, leaving the marines speechless.

"I thought he was dead."

"Holy mother ofâ€¦!"

"Who's that?"

"What. The. What?"

"Snap out of it, marines! We could use your help." Carter told them.

"Ye-Yes, sir!" One of them stuttered, readying his MA5D and firing at another Knight.

The others joined him, adding their own lead to his, and bringing down the Knight as Noble took down the other two.

"Clear. Nice work, marines. Come with us. We're going to clear an LZ for Commander Lasky." Carter told the marines.

"Right behind you, sir."

The group fought their way to a locked door, with an AI pedestal nearby.

"_Put me in the console_." Cortana told John.

He approached the console and slid the chip in.

"The marines got trapped trying to get through this door. Hold them off long enough for me to open the doors!" Cortana told them.

After a few minutes of intense fighting, the door had still not opened.

"Cortana?" John asked.

"**You do your job, and I'll do mine, okay?!**" She yelled in a distorted voice.

They kept fighting, burning through more and more ammo, until Cortana got the door open.

"Got it! Pull me, Chief."

He walked up and pulled the chip out and replaced it in his helmet.

"_I'm sorry for yelling at you back there. That door's security was harder than I expected._"

"It's alright." John told her.

"_No, it's not. How is _this _alright?_"

The Chief didn't answer, instead just walking towards the end of the tunnel. At the end, a Knight approached a pair of Elites.

"_Knight! Wait, what's he doing?_" Cortana informed them.

The Spartans all fired at once, taking out the Knight and his Elite cohorts.

"_I'm shocked that the Didact has unified these Covenant so

quickly._"

"Well, they _do_ kind of worship him, soâ€¦!" James began.

"Not now." John told him as he took out a trio of Grunts with his Battle Rifle.

"_Knights!_" Cortana told them as three Prometheans warped to the battlefield.

One was immediately destroyed by a hypersonic projectile.

"How do you like _that_, you robot fuck!?" A marine shouted.

The other marines advanced, with the Spartans leading them and gunning down anything that opposed them. Two of the remaining marines perished, but the other two fought like hell to avenge them.

"Commander, LZ secured." Cortana told Lasky.

"_Roger, Cortana. I'll get you the coordinates for the~" _The XO began.

_ "Mayday, mayday! Code Red! Hostiles attempting to gain access to the Infinity bridge!_" Someone interrupted.

"_They're outside the hatch!_"_

_ "Door's breached! Door's breached!"_

_ "All ground units are ordered to return to Infinity immediately!"_

"_Chief, I'm redirecting the Spartan-IVs to rally point Alpha Sierra Foxtrot. Until we catch up, you have tactical command of the forward assault force! Rendezvous with those men and take back that ship!_" Lasky told him.

A Pelican touched down behind them, and the Spartans got in.

"_This is Pelican 5-9-5. We have Noble Team onboard and are outbound for rally point Alpha Sierra Foxtrot."_ The pilot reported.

When they arrived, the Spartans piled out, with the Chief instantly going for the Scorpion Tank nearby.

"_Weapons free, Chief! Let 'em have it!_" Cortana told him.

The rest of the Spartans seated themselves on the jumpseats and the turret, and the tank rolled out for the ship.

"_117, Lasky. We're touching down just north of your position. Proceed to starboard hangar 2-19, and we'll link up with you there._"

There were quite a few hostiles between them and the hangar, but nothing the tank couldn't handle. The Grunts squished quite nicely, and the Elites made a magnificent crunching sound, as did the Ghosts. When they reached the hangar, they found the doors

sealed.

"_Commander, the hangar bay doors are sealed tight._" Cortana told Lasky.

"_Roger, Cortana. We'll find a way inside and free up one of the mooring platforms. XO out._"

The door opened, and John navigated the tank into the lift. There were Covenant everywhere in the hangar bay, including a Hunter pair.

"I got them!" Jorge yelled as he jumped off and blazed the pair with his HMG. They went down when James added the Scorpion's MG to Jorge's. The rest of the Covenant went down easy.

"_Master Chief. This is Captain Del Rio. Lasky just pinged me. You picked a hell of a time to rejoin us._" The Captain told him.

"Sir, what's our status?" James asked.

"_That satellite took down the ship's defenses and is extracting data from the mainframe as we speak._"

"Can we break the connection?" John asked.

"_Main point of contact is on the upper hull. Fastest route is through the maintenance causeway. There's a Mantis docked inside the door. Take it. You'll need the extra firepower._"

The Chief activated the controls to bring the Mantis up, and got in. The team fought their way to the upper hull, where they found three Covenant jammers which John easily destroyed with the Mantis. Carter found another Mantis and hopped in, helping the Master Chief to clear the Covenant ground troops off of the hull.

"_MAC guns are online, but EM readings are blocking the uplink. You'll have to link it manually._" Del Rio told him.

Jun hit the button, and the MAC's came to life.

"_All forward guns, get that satellite the hell away from my ship. Fire at will!_"

The 3 MAC guns roared and fired their 600 ton slugs at the Didact's ship. It turned and retreated.

"_All hands, we are Condition Yellow. Stand down. Section heads: begin damage assessment._" Del Rio ordered.

Noble Team returned to the bridge and were joined by Lasky and Spartan-IV Commander Sarah Palmer.

"What I want to know is: What the hell are they and why are they here?" Del Rio asked, indicating to a holographic image of a Promethean Knight.

"_They seem to be native to Requiem, or at least what counts as native for a Forerunner AI._" Cortana told him

"This doesn't make sense; we've never encountered this kind of resistance at any of the other installations."

"Other installations?" John asked.

"Colonel." Del Rio said in an agitated voice.

"_Infinity_'s mission has been to find and establish research bases at the rest of the Halo rings. We've got bases on Installations 3 and 5, but then we had some complications." Carter told him.

"A science team got zapped excavating an artifact on Installation 03. This sensor data is all that's left." Del Rio said as a series of images appeared on the holo-table.

"_These are a derivation of the Forerunner glyph system._" Cortana told them.

"And our scientists managed to pull a set of coordinates from them. I'll give you 3 guesses where they led us."

"Captain, Gypsy Company is prepped and ready to roll on your orders." Commander Palmer interrupted, handing Del Rio a datapad.

"Thank you, Palmer. Lasky, get a team ready, I want boots on the ground in 60."

"Sir? We're not going after the Didact?" James asked.

"This is a First Contact scenario. Our first priority is to file a report to FLEETCOM."

"_You mean we're leaving?_" Cortana asked.

"Sir, the Didact's vulnerable." John said.

Del Rio took a step towards the Master Chief.

"He isn't the only one. You know, I think you of all people would understand the value of living to fight another day."

Del Rio left, as did Lasky and Noble Team. John cast a look at Cortana, and then grabbed her data chip and followed.

****FINALLY! IT'S DONE! ANOTHER CHAPTER! WOOHOO!****

****Till next time! (Which hopefully won't be so long.)****

****MASTER CHIEF! VS! LEONIDAS!****

****BEGIN!****

37. Chapter 37

Chapter 37: Reclaimer

Noble Team sat in the dark interior of a Pelican dropship as it flew towards their objective. Kat threw a holo-projector on the floor, and Captain Del Rio appeared.

"_Infinity to Noble Team. The air corridor to the gravity well is blocked by a network of particle cannons, and Infinity's shields are still down. Scans indicate that the cannons are controlled from a command post south of our position. Roll on that target._"

"Captain, what's Force Recon's assessment of the terrain?" John asked.

"_I know you've been off the field for a while, Master Chief, but this is a blowthrough op. sending in recon would just slow us down. Take out the gravity well, and we'll meet you on the other side. Infinity out._"

The link cut, and the interior of the dropship darkened once again.

"_I don't know about you, but I like a little more intel with my intel._" Cortana told him.

"We'll make it work."

The door behind them opened, and the seven Spartans stepped out as the dropship landed.

"_Chief. Spartan Sarah Palmer, Infinity CIC. Commander Lasky is waiting for you in the Mammoth._"

Around the next curve was a gigantic eight-wheeled vehicle sporting a mini-MAC on the top.

"_Well, someone's overcompensating._" Cortana said as they boarded.

There were a few Warthogs in the main bay, and a few weapon racks filled with MA5D's, BR85's and Rocket Launchers. On the upper deck, they found a pair of Sniper Rifles, and Jun instantly had one in his hands. James grabbed the other and found Commander Lasky at the front of the deck.

"Chief. Unfortunately for us, we gotta manually take out a few of these cannons before we can hit the command center."

"We'll take care of it, Commander."

"That's what I like to hear. There are a few jetpacks onboard. You should grab them in case you need to go groundside."

"_Infinity to Gypsy Company. We need those cannons gone now. Get to it._" Captain Del Rio told them as the Spartans grabbed the jetpacks.

"Good?" Carter asked as everyone integrated the packs with their systems, except James, who already had one.

"Good." Kat said.

"Seamless." Jun reported.

"I'm clear." Emile told him.

"Little small, but it'll do." Jorge said.

"Good." The Chief said.

"Excellent. Let's get back to the front."

They returned to find that Commander Lasky had gone inside.

"_Gypsy Company, locked and cleared. Moving out._" Lasky reported.

The Mammoth began to move. It was a bit slow, but faster than an Elephant, and better armed. As it moved along a sheer cliff, three Pelicans flew in above them.

"_Captain Del Rio, targeting Pelicans are in position near the particle cannons, waiting for the Mammoth's mini-MAC to take them out._" Palmer told the Captain.

The Spartans saw that one of the Pelicans was a little too close to the first cannon, and sweet mother, that cannon was big.

"_Seven-Six-Six__, lose some altitude, you're inside the kill box._" Palmer told the pilot.

"_Almost got a lock. Just a little moreâ€¦|_"

The cannon began charging up to fire as the Mammoth rounded a bend and got a good look at it.

"_Pelican! Fall back!_" Palmer ordered.

Too late. The cannon fired, wiping two of the dropships out completely and crippling the third.

"Damnit!" James said.

"_Infinity! Pelicans down!_" Lasky reported.

"_Get to the crash site and retrieve that designator, Gypsy. You've got no chance of taking out those cannons without it._" Del Rio told them.

"_Covenant squads digging in on the ridgeline. Weapons free, people._" Lasky announced.

The Chief jumped on the missile turret nearby and opened up on the Covenant. Jun snapped off two clean headshots, and Jorge took out three with his Battle Rifle.

"_Eyes up, Gypsy. Dropships on approach!_" Lasky announced.

"_There's Gypsy Seven's Pelican. Down in the muck. Anyone still alive?_" Palmer asked.

"_We're here! We're alive. We've got the target designator._" Someone said.

"I'll get to them and retrieve the designator." The Chief said.

The Chief took a running jump off of the Mammoth and used his jetpack to slow his fall. He broke into a dead sprint to get to the designator, and then painted a Phantom dropship for the mini-MAC.

"_Target acquired._" Cortana told him.

The MAC devastated the dropship.

"_Alright, Master Chief. We're clear. Mini-MAC's at your disposal. Take out that cannon._" Lasky told him.

He painted the target, and a second later, the MAC fired, destroying the first particle cannon.

"_Target suppressed. Nicely done, Chief._"

"_Lasky to Infinity. First contact cleared, but no joy on additional targets. Gypsy moving on to secondary battle position, but requesting evac for casualties._"

"_I'm on it, Commander. Palmer out._"

The ride was silent, or as close to silent as one could get with a gigantic engine roaring in the background, for a little while, until a Phantom dropship swooped in and opened fire.

"_More Covenant._" Cortana told them.

"This is why swoopingâ€¦ is bad." A Spartan-IV said.

"_Force field, barricading the far side of this canyon. I'm seeing three power sources. Shut them down so the Mammoth can move through._" Cortana said.

"Let's take a Warthog. Emile, Jun, with me." John said.

The three Spartans took a Warthog and quickly disabled the power sources.

"_Shield's disabled. Mammoth, the path is clear._" Cortana said.

"_Mammoth holding position. Whenever you're ready to proceed, Chief._" Lasky told them.

"Guess we'd better grab one, too." James said back on the Mammoth.

"Let's go. Jorge, keep the Mammoth clear." Carter told the II.

"I got it."

James, Carter and Kat went down and grabbed another Warthog and joined the Chief at the far side of the canyon as the Mammoth trailed them. They found a second cannon, and the Chief painted it for the Mammoth. As it fired, a Covenant ship rose up and flew towards

them.

"_All units, unidentified Covenant vehicle incoming!_" Lasky announced.

"Shoot it down! Concentrate fire!" Carter told Noble.

"No good! Armor's too thick!" Emile said.

It shot a green beam at the Mammoth, and the huge vehicle stopped dead.

"_Mammoth's hit! Forward traction offline! Primary power controls offline!_" Lasky announced.

The vehicle flew overhead and stopped over a mesa nearby.

"_The Mammoth won't last long out in the open like that! We need to keep the Covenant off of them._" Cortana said.

The Chief noticed a Gauss Hog nearby and his team dumped their Warthog for the Gauss.

"_That ship's settling in over the mesa. There's a grav lift into the belly of the ship, time it right and we should be able to ride it inside._"

The Chief took his Warthog up to the ship, and the three Spartans rode the lift into the ship, a minute later, all three jumped out of the side as it blew up.

"_Thanks, Chief. It was getting a bit dicey there for a minute. All hands, form up on us._" Lasky said

"_Lasky this is Infinity, status?_" Del Rio asked.

"_Mammoth's in pretty bad shape, sir. She'll make it to the objective as long as nobody starts throwing rocks at us._"

"_Not a chance we can take. I'm sending out teams to pull some of their fire off you so you can make it to the gravity well._"

"This should be good." Jun commented.

"_Roger that, sir. Gypsy, let's move._" Lasky said.

"_Shadow Company, Castle Company. Put some pressure on those other particle cannons._" Del Rio ordered.

"_Castle reading 5-by-5. On station, ready to assist._"

"_Shadow Actual to Infinity. Encountering enemy air! Significant EOF closer to the emplacements._"

The Mammoth kept moving, with Noble and the Chief returning the Warthogs, only slightly used.

"_Okay folks. Terrain's too rough around these tributaries. Assault force, back on the Mammoth, anyone not on is getting left behind._"

A few seconds later, Lasky gave the order to seal up the Mammoth, and it kept moving.

"_Mammoth is mobile._"

"Why do I get the feeling this won't end well?" James asked when they got back up to the top deck.

"Because it won't." The Chief replied.

"_**They don't care about you. They replaced you!**__ Blast it!_" Cortana said.

"Uhâ€¦| what was that?" Carter asked.

"â€¦|Shit." James said.

"It's been that long, hasn't it?" Emile asked.

"Yes. Cortana can hold out." The Chief said.

"We know that." Carter replied.

"_Do you even understand what rampancy is? We don't just 'shut down'. Our cognitive process begin dividing exponentially according to our total knowledge database. We literally think ourselves to death._" Cortana explained.

"You know we won't let that happen." James reassured her.

"_And if it happens anyway?_" She asked.

They never got a chance to respond, as if they would have been able to anyway.

"_Noble, Lasky._"

"Go, Commander." Carter said.

"_We got significant blockage up ahead. I think this is about it for the Mammoth._"

"_The command post for the cannons is through that trench._" Cortana told them.

"Sir, we can move faster alone." The Chief told Lasky.

"_We'll see you back on _Infinity,_ Commander._" Cortana said.

The seven Spartans jumped off the Mammoth and proceeded into the trench, where they found a small UNSC weapons cache and a shitload of Covenant, led by a Promethean Knight.

"Oh, good. For a while there, I thought that the Covenant and the Prometheans were back to killing each other." Emile commented as he blasted a hole in a Jackal Sniper's chest with his shotgun.

"Don't jinx it!" James said as he stabbed a Grunt's methane tank and left it to die.

Jun slid behind a small rock and propped his Sniper Rifle on it, steadying his aim. Then came the shots. Two. One after the other. Two Jackal Snipers fell over, with holes in their heads.

Carter, on the other hand, snapped off five shots with his DMR, killing three Grunts and two Jackals with clean headshots.

The team pressed forward, coming to a small bridge with a lot of snipers at the other end, and plenty of cover on the Spartan's side. Jun and James slid behind a pair of crates and had a field day, snapping off shot after shot, killing Grunt after Grunt after Grunt after Jackal after Grunt. When the other side was clear, they crossed the bridge and came face-to-face with a Promethean Knight. It warped in close and staggered the Chief, but James delivered a kick to its chest which brought it down to his level. He grabbed its head and smashed it into his knee, which crushed it.

"Clean and simple."

They fought off more Covenant, and a few Prometheans, which garnered an interesting insult from Emile.

"God, the dog has more balls than you, Grunt." He said to a fleeing Grunt as he shot it dead.

"At least it turned and faced its death like a man."

They entered the structure.

"_Cortana to Infinity. We're entering the Forerunner structure._"

The transmission from Captain Del Rio was too garbled to understand.

"_Breaking up, but coordinates received, Infinity._"

As they entered, they saw their old friends, the Sentinels. Which didn't fire on them. The most distinguishing feature was that they had blue lights, not orangelike the Prometheans.

"These must not be under the Didact's control." James said as he approached one.

The Sentinel's color changed to green and then shifted back to blue. It then sped off a ways, and looked back at them, almost wanting them to follow it.

"Huh?"

"_It must have recognized your Forerunner genetics._" Cortana explained.

"Okay. Lead the way, Mr. Flying Robot."

It took them to an elevator, and then left as the door closed behind them.

"_This elevator should take us directly to the coordinates Infinity provided._" Cortana said.

"This could be a trap." The Chief said.

"_You say that like there's a second possibility._"

They reached the bottom, and the door in front of them opened up to a large corridor, which took them another room like the one they entered the structure in. More Sentinels were in the room, and one opened a door for them. They entered into another room like the previous, and another Sentinel opened a nearby door, which led to the particle cannon network controls.

"_We've reached the coordinates. This looks like the place._"

"That console. That's the network controls." Kat said, pointing to a console at the far end of the room.

The Chief jogged up and placed Cortana's data chip in the terminal. In front of them were four holograms that looked like the cannons. Two were lit up, but two were grayed out, indicating non-operation.

"Definitely cannon controls." Jun said.

"The particle cannon network must use these arrays for targeting and guidance. It's an automated system, so it won't _technically_ allow me to redirect the cannons to fire on one anotherâ€¦|_ technically._" Cortana explained.

"Cortana to Infinity. The guns should be offline. How's it look from up there? Infinity?"

"Cortana?" John asked.

"Something's in hereâ€¦|" She began.

A weird sound was heard, and Cortana looked noticeably scared.

"CHIEF!" She yelled as her avatar disappeared from the console.

"Cortana? Cortana!"

"Shit, shit, shit. I knew it!" James said.

"It's a trap." Emile said.

"We need to find Cortana. Move out." Carter ordered.

As they ran back to the door, a lightbridge appeared off to their right.

"Now, I'm really thinking this is a trap." Emile said as they crossed.

The Chief was already across the bridge and heading up a small ramp that led to a small corridor. The Chief was already a quarter of the

way down the corridor, and at the end, the team was greeted by a Sentinel, which flew off when they approached. They jumped out into a room and tracked the Sentinel as it flew to their right and near a door. There were 4 other Sentinels there, as well, in perfect formation.

"Shit, shit, shit." James said.

"Jesus. You sound like a crippled helmsman when his ship gets boarded by aliens from a place that no one has ever gone to and survived." Emile said.

"Shut up."

The Sentinels stayed in rigid formation as the Spartans passed them, and then flew off as the door opened, revealing a large chamber with an energy beam in the middle. As the Chief and James approached side-by-side, they were pulled in.

"CHIEF! JAMES!" Carter yelled as they disappeared.

White. Everything was white. Then the light started to die down, and the two Spartans could see once more. They were standing near a Forerunner tower of some sort.

"Where are we?" James asked.

There was someone else here. James knew the face, but couldn't place it.

"Who are you?" John asked.

"I am what remains of the Forerunner once known as the Librarian." It said in a feminine voice.

"Librarian? Theâ€¦ Didact's wife." James remembered.

"Waitâ€¦ how do I know that?"

"The Forerunner in you has established contact with the Domain."

"The cumulative knowledge of the Forerunners."

"Yes. My memories were retained to assist humanity on their path to the Mantle. Though sadly, that plan is now at risk. The Didact is leaving Requiem. Soon. You must not allow it."

"Leaving?" James asked.

"He seeks this- the Composer." She began as a hologram of an enormous device appeared behind the Spartans. "A device which will allow him to finally contain the greatest enemy ever faced by the Forerunners. You. Mankind spread into the stars with an unexpected, desperate violence. Entire systems fell before the Didact's Warrior-Servants rose to halt the aggression. When the Didact finally exhausted the humans, after a millennia, his sentence was severe."

"We had no way of knowing that the Forerunners were not your only enemy. Humanity hadn't been expanding. They were running. Weakened

from our conflict, we were no match for the parasite which pursued you. The Forerunners made plans for a final, great journey. But the Didact refused to yield our Mantle of Responsibility. He would save all life in the galaxy, at a cost."

"In the Forerunner's quest for transcendence, the Composer had been intended to bridge the organic and digital realms. It would have made us immortal. But its results soured. The stored personalities fragmented, and our attempts to return them into biological states created only abominations. The Flood only assimilated living tissue."

"The Composer would provide the Didact his solution and his revenge." The Librarian concluded.

"The Prometheans and They're..." James began.

"Human." Both Spartans said at the same time.

"They were only the beginning. He would have encrypted your entire race if we had not removed the Composer from his care and imprisoned him here. Reclaimers, when I indexed mankind for repopulation, I hid seeds from the Didact. Seeds which would eventually lead to an eventuality. Your physical evolution. Your combat skin. Even your ancilla, Cortana. You are the culmination of a thousand lifetimes of planning."

"Planning for what?" John asked.

A low rumble sounded off in the distance.

"He has found us." The Librarian said.

"Even in death, her meddling continues." The familiar voice of the Didact sounded as platforms rose in front of the Spartans, Promethean Knights on them.

"Reclaimers! The genesong I placed within you contains many gifts, including an immunity to the Composer. But it must be unlocked."

"How?" John asked.

"Relinquish your contact, essence." The Didact thundered.

"Screw you." James said, raising his rifle to the Knights.

"Your evolutionary journey must be accelerated."

"Can we defeat the Didact without it?" John asked.

"No."

"Then do it." James said.

"Prepare."

The Spartan's bodies glowed as they came back into the room they were previously in. They both went down to a knee and then stood up, alone.

"Where is everyone?" James asked.

"Chief! Up here!" Cortana shouted as Prometheans attacked the pair.

John ran to the platform and Cortana assimilated into the data chip. James eyed a Knight ahead of them.

"How do we get out of here?" John asked.

"_Elevator. Back of the chamber."_

The pair fought the Prometheans for every step of ground to get to the back of the chamber and to the elevator. As they got on, it started to descend.

"_What happened to you two? Your bio readings are all over the map!_" Cortana observed.

"Long story, but we know what the Didact is after." James said.

"_I know that part. The Librarian filled me in when she snatched me from the system. But what I don't know is what she did to you two!_"

At the bottom, they found a portal waiting for them. They stepped through, and found themselves back in the action outside the gravity well.

"_I'm reading Sierras One-One-Seven and Zero-Zero-Five on-sensor. Everyone form up on the Spartans!_" A marine reported.

"Sierra One-One-Seven to Infinity. What's our status?" John commed.

"_We're taking a beating up here!_" Del Rio reported as the ship came into view above them.

"Does Infinity have a shot on the gravity well?" James asked.

"_Negative. We'll never be able to get a target lock with all the air traffic we're seeing."_

"_Captain, what if we can spot the target for you with the target designator?_" Cortana suggested.

"_Do it! TAC-COM, find the Chief coordinates for somewhere with line-of-sight!_"

"_First line clear. Check it off. Push forward. All eyes on the Spartans, they're lead dogs!_" The marine leader said as the Spartans grabbed a tank and destroyed the first line of Covenant.

"_Noble Six, this is Noble One._" Carter said over the comm.

"Sir, where are you?" James asked as he blazed a Ghost with the Scorpion's machine gun.

"_We're a few clicks north of your position. We'll meet you on Infinity._"

"Roger that. Six out."

They pushed up, annihilating the Covenant defenders until they were blocked by a giant shield.

"_Looks like we're blocked. Head down and find a way to disable that shield._" Cortana told them.

"Two generators. Two Spartans. Split up?" James asked.

"No. Stay with me." John replied.

"Okay."

They quickly found the first generator, with an Elite with a fuel rod gun waiting behind the shield that cloaked the generator.

"Fire it! I dare you! I fricking dare you!" James taunted.

It never got a chance, because the tank ran the Elite over and destroyed the generator. The second was not as exciting.

"_There's a clearing just past this ravine. We can get eyes on the gravity well up there._" Cortana told them.

"On foot. Move!" John ordered as they jumped out of the tank.

They broke into a dead sprint as the pair raced for the clearing to give Infinity a shot at the gravity well. John got there just a little faster than James did, and scooped up the target designator that was lying in wait for them.

"_Infinity, we're at the gravity well._" Cortana reported.

"_Then paint that damn target so we can get out of here_!" Del Rio ordered.

"You heard the man! Line up the shot!" James said.

John aimed the designator at the gravity well and locked in the target.

"_Target locked! Firing for effect!_" Del Rio reported.

The lone MAC round flew straight and true into the gravity well, destroying it. James and John turned and walked off as the gravity well exploded.

"Nice work." James said.

John stayed silent.

* * *

><p>Infinity Command Deck. CIC.

"Infinity cannot handle that kind of punishment. Not again!" Del Rio

argued.

"This isn't about us or this ship anymore." Cortana shot back.

"Sir, we've seen what the Didact is capable of. If we let him leave this world, humanity will be at risk." The Chief said.

"Lookâ€¦ I understand what you think you saw." Del Rio began.

"_THINK?_" Cortana said.

"With all due respect, sir, we know what we saw." James said.

"And with all due respect to you, Soldier, I'm not willing to jeopardize my ship because of the hallucinations of a pair of aging Spartans and their malfunctioning AI!" Del Rio rebuked.

"Sir, what if they're right?" Lasky asked.

"Nav, as soon as we know we are airtight, I want a course laid in to Carinae Station. Comm, prepare a warning beacon."

The room began to shake. Everyone assembled saw Cortana flash red with anger.

"Oh, shit." Emile gasped.

"I will notâ€¦ allow youâ€¦ to leaveâ€¦ thisâ€¦ PLANET!"

As she finished, a pulse of energy was let loose.

"Cortanaâ€¦" The Chief said.

"I didn't mean toâ€¦ I didn't mean to do thatâ€¦" Cortana said.

"Commander Lasky, pursuant to Article 55 of UNSC regulation 12-145-72, I am ordering you to remove that AI's data chip and retire it for final dispensation." Del Rio commanded.

"Don'tâ€¦ Pleaseâ€¦ Please. I don't want toâ€¦ You don't want me toâ€¦ Please."

"Remove the chip now, Commander!"

"Pleaseâ€¦ I don't want toâ€¦"

Lasky reached for the chip, but James cut him off as John took the chip.

"Give. Me. That. Chip."

"The Didact has to be stopped. If you won't do that, we will." John said as he put the chip in his helmet.

"I am ordering youâ€¦ TO SURRENDER THAT AI!"

The Chief got right into the Captain's face.

"No, sir."

"Lieutenant! Arrest that man!" Del Rio shouted at Commander Palmer.

"Fuck you! He's a damned hero! If you touch him, I'll shoot you myself!" James yelled, pulling out his M6H.

"Colonel! Arrest them both!" The Captain shouted at Carter.

Carter took a step forward.

"Let's move, Noble Team. We're gonna stop the Didact. Master Chief, you're with us. And that's an order."

"Yes, sir." John said as the seven Spartans left the bridge.

"COLONEL!" Del Rio yelled after them.

"Get word back to Earth that trouble is coming. We'll do what we can from here." The Chief said as he followed Noble out.

38. Chapter 38

Chapter 38: Shutdown

****Why does Mass Effect 2's 'Suicide Mission' song go great with Halo? I can't seem to place why, but it does! Listen to it as you play Shutdown on H4. It really fits.****

"I can give you over forty-thousand reasons why I know that sun isn't real. I know because the emitter's Rayleigh effect is disproportionate to its suggested size. I know it because its stellar cycle is more symmetrical than an actual star. But for all that, I'll never actually know if it looks real. If it feels real." Cortana said as she watched Requiem's 'sun'.

She turned and found the Chief and James loading their weapons.

"Before this is over, promise me you'll figure out which one of us is the machine." She told the Chief.

Commander Lasky entered the room, and James stiffened up, as he expected the Commander to stop them, or worse.

"So, what's your plan?"

"Infinity's tracked the Didact's vessel to a docking structure southeast of here. We'll jump ship as Infinity exits the roof." John said.

"You know, I was sent down here with orders to prevent you from leaving. In case you had already gone, I took the precaution of ordering a Pelican outfitted for full combat pursuit." He said as the dropship rose up behind them and the other Spartans of Noble Team entered the room.

"I hope to God you're wrong about that Forerunner or whatever he is, Chief, but if you're notâ€¦"

He nodded to the Pelican.

"And Chief? Good luck. All of you."

Lasky left the room as Noble assembled around the dropship.

"C'mon, Chief. Take a girl for a ride." Cortana said as the Chief grabbed her data chip and slid it into his helmet.

"Alright. Chief, you're flying. James, you and Jorge have the side guns. Emile, you've got the cannon on top. The rest of us are passengers. Load up, Spartans." Carter instructed.

They all loaded up, and Cortana began a pre-systems check.

"_Forward autocannon: check. Lateral rail turrets: check. Side-mounted chainguns: check. Topside cannon: check. Main Thrusters: check. Auxiliary Boosters, check. All right. Keying enginesâ€¦ now._"

"_It may be a while before we find another ride home. You guys know that, right?_"

"It'll be okay." The Chief said as he hit the thrusters and accelerated out of the _Infinity_.

"_Contact. Didact. Dead ahead._"

"He's got shields!" Emile reported.

"How do we get inside them?" The Chief asked.

"_Marking two of the larger facilities on your HUD. They're acting as traffic control for resources moving to and from the satellite. If we disrupt their communications, I can forge an override code and convince it to lower those defenses._"

"Go right. I've heard stories about people who went left first. They never end well." Emile said.

They went to the tower on the right. The Chief hovered the dropship just above the landing platform as Carter, Jun and Kat piled out, and then he landed.

"Clear!" Carter reported.

The Spartans entered the structure.

"_Slight complication. There are millions of transmissions passing through this structure, not simply the ones controlling the movement through the satellite's shield._"

"Can you isolate the satellite communications?" John asked as he led the team into the structure.

"_Not quickly, and shutting them all down's not an option, but destroying the system's attenuators should flood the network. Of

course, if Infinity wasn't on their way back to Earth, they could overload the attenuators remotely._"

"We'll handle it." Carter said.

"_That's hardly the point._"

The Chief led them into a large room, where they were immediately attacked by three Promethean fliers.

"_The attenuators are housed in Faraday enclosures. I bet there's a release somewhere around here._"

Carter and Jun took out the fliers as more Prometheans descended upon the team. The Chief found the release and activated it.

"_Okay, the structure contains three central attenuators. Sever those connections and we should be good._"

"Okay, let's go. Stick together. No heroics." Carter ordered.

The Spartans were immediately assaulted by Prometheans of all classes. James' expert use of a Promethean Suppressor took out two of the dogs while the Chief and Carter double-teamed the lone Knight, and overwhelmed it with SAW fire. The rest of the team dealt with the fliers, which proved to be a huge nuisance, as they tried to bring the Knight back. The Chief shot the attenuator with his shotgun, and the ball of energy inside disappeared.

"_Second attenuatorâ€¦ up ahead._" Cortana told them as a Knight warped in to their position.

The team blasted it with their weapons, but it warped away before they could kill it. It warped back, and this time, Jorge tackled it, Emile rammed his kukri into its head, and it disintegrated.

"Nice work." Jun said from an elevated position as he scoped the area with his sniper rifle.

The team was assaulted by more Prometheans, and they were all taken care of, but more than a few shields had to regenerate more than a few times during the assault. Carter tossed a frag grenade into the attenuator, and it blew up.

"_Great, the increased signal traffic is entirely blocking out the satellite communications. Only one more target left._" Cortana told them.

By now, most of the team was using Forerunner weapons, and they all agreed that they were very effective.

"We should use these more often." James commented.

"Don't count on it. ONI will want to dissect these things." Carter told him.

"Fuck ONI. I love this thing." James said as he shouldered his Lightrifle.

The team pressed on, and was met byâ€¦

You guessed it.

More Knights.

"Goddamn things. Just die, will you?" James said as he blasted a Knight that got a little close with his Promethean shotgun.

The Chief was engaged in close-combat with another Knight, and he had his knife out and was trying to find a weak spot to stab. As he dodged a swipe from the Knight's hardlight sword, he grabbed its arm, snapped it off, and sliced the Knight's head off with its own sword. He threw the sword over the side of the platform, and led the team onward.

They found the last attenuator, and James threw a Forerunner grenade into the core, leaving it to blow as the Spartans left.

"_That's it. Transmission buffers are overflowing. Get us to the second tower._" Cortana said.

The others scatter like embers over sand. And yet the Librarian's champions are unmoved.

James and the Chief heard the Didact talking, but it echoed, sounding as if it was coming from their minds.

"Uhâ€¦ Cortana? Where is this coming from?" James asked.

"_Where's what coming from_?" She asked.

"What are you hearing?" Carter asked.

"Didact." The Chief answered.

"Nothing." Jorge said.

"Me either." Emile said.

"Nothing on comms." Kat reported.

The Mantle of Responsibility for the galaxy shelters all, humans. But only the Forerunners are its masters. The Didact said.

"He's there. Keep looking." The Chief said.

"Come on, regroup and move out. We need to get to the other tower." Carter said, taking point.

The fight out was easier than the fight in. the only real problem was the Knight at the end, just inside the tower, wielding an Incineration Cannon. James threw his knife at it, and it stabbed the Knight in the leg, bringing it down long enough for the team to hose it down with hardlight.

"Dibs on the rocket launcher." James said as he scooped up the weapon and it formed in his hands.

As they left the tower, Cortana told them that the Covenant's air traffic was increasing.

"_If we don't disable the other tower quickly, reaching the Didact could become exponentially more difficult._"

"Same positions. Load up." Carter said as they approached the Pelican.

When the team was loaded, the Chief took off, making a beeline for the other tower. They could already see the Phantoms massing near the second tower.

"Get those guns ready, Spartans! This is gonna be a hell of a fight." James yelled as the Pelican approached.

The Chief had already prepared the undermounted Spartan Laser, and planted the reticle right on one of the Phantoms. He fired twice, and it went up in flames as James and Jorge blazed another with the MGs, and Emile hit a third with the cannon.

"Clear! Let's go." Emile said.

The Pelican set down, and the team was out and in the tower in a matter of seconds.

"_This node's different from the previous tower. The source of the tower communications is a carrier wave generator located somewhere inside._"

"Oh, boy." James said.

The team entered a huge room with a gondola on their side of the huge gap, and the carrier wave generator on the other side.

"_It looks like the carrier wave generator is located at the far end of this chamber. Find us a way across._"

"Gondola. Kat?" Carter said.

"On it."

Soon enough, the gondola started moving towards the generator.

"_To take a page out of our old playbook, I'm going to tune your shields to emit an EMP at the same frequency as the communication network._ All you'll need to do to trigger it is to make physical contact with the carrier wave generator._"

A beam shot past Carter's helmet, and he turned to see Jackal Snipers on the platforms nearby.

"Snipers! Jun?"

"I got them."

Three shots rang out, and three Jackals went down.

"_The Didact's given them access to the system overrides. You're going to have to wrestle for it._" Cortana told them.

"Move! Push forward." Carter ordered.

"_It's up there._" Cortana told them.

"Where?" The Chief asked.

When she didn't answer, The Chief tapped the back of his helmet.

"_Right. Waypoint._"

A marker appeared in the team's HUDs, and they started up.

"James, use your jetpack. Get up to the controls."

"Got it, sir."

He hit the thrusters, and was gone.

"This thing is amazing!" He shouted as he landed on an Elite and slammed his knife into it.

He ran to the gondola controls and restarted it.

"Go! It's leaving!" He shouted.

As the rest of Noble backtracked to the gondola, James and the Chief ran around the other side, killing two Knights, including a Commander, that blocked them. More Prometheans warped onto the gondola, and Noble opened up on them, killing all the dogs. The Knight was another story, as it had an Incineration Cannon, which it fired like a maniac. Jun finally got it with a shot from his SR-99.

"Nice shot, Snipes." James called from the top of the gondola.

"_Start us back up._" Cortana told them.

Kat hit the button, and Knights appeared, one right in front of James.

"Holy-!"

He smashed his fist and knife into the Knight, and it was dead.

"_They're trying to override the gondola controls again._" Cortana said as it stopped.

"_Your actions tread between honor and foolishness._" The Didact said.

"Cortana, are you hearing him?" John asked.

"_No. Didact?_"

"I hear him." James said.

"Just keep moving. We need to get to that generator." Carter told them.

"Wait, I have an idea. Chief, I need Cortana." James said.

"Why?"

"I'm going to jet over and disrupt the carrier wave generator. I can make it, with the adjustments that Cortana can make to the pack." He explained.

"Do it. We'll get the gondola restarted." Carter said.

The Chief gave James Cortana's data chip, and he jetted over to the generator.

"_Okayâ€| shield's tuned. Go for it. Just walk into the beam, and we're golden._"

He walked in and nothing happened.

"_Give it a secondâ€|_"

"_We got the gondola restarted._" Carter reported.

Suddenly, the orange field went down, and so did James' shields.

"Carrier wave generator is down." He said.

The gondola linked to the platform, and James ran for it, while being attacked by fliers.

"_Watch out!_" Cortana shouted.

"Chief! Catch!" James said as he threw the data chip and unslung his Suppressor.

John snagged it out of the air and put it back in his helmet, and then joined the rest of the Spartans in killing the fliers. All six of them.

"Maybe the ride back won't be so deadly." James commented as the gondola started up again.

"_We're clear. All transmissions between the towers and the satellite have ceased._"

You are fools. Even now, your kind tinkers with the Composer in the shadow of the third ring. Children and fire, who disregard the welfare of the galaxy. The Didact said.

When the gondola reached the entrance, the team was off in a heartbeat. They returned to their Pelican, and left for the satellite.

Do you truly believe these theatrics can prevent my departure? Embrace your sad fate and retain your nobility. I am already beyond you.

"_He knows what we're trying to do. If we get too close to that ship,

we're dead._" Cortana said.

"_Iâ€¦ I have an idea. Head for that waypoint._"

A marker appeared on the Chief's HUD, and he took the Pelican in fast to it. It led them to another tower that opened up as they approached.

"_Those defense spires we keep running into are being controlled from this tower. Get me to the control room, and we might be able to reposition them to block the Didact's ship from leaving._"

"Nice. Seal him in." Carter commented.

They set down and entered the tower, climbing a gravity lift to the top.

You will relent, Humans, or you will perish. All in life is choice. And your day to choose has come.

As they exited, the walkways began to shift around them.

"_He's altering the tower!_" Cortana said in a distorted voice.

A gap opened up in front of the team as they sidetracked to get around, and they jumped it seamlessly. They encountered Covenant forces, and wiped them off the face of Requiem.

"_I'm seeing a control facility at the top of this tower! We need to be there yesterday!_" Cortana told them.

"On it- Hunters!" Jorge shouted as the pair of big tanks came down.

John stood his ground as he launched two Railgun shots at one, and then threw a pair of plasma grenades at it, which brought it down. The second launched a fuel rod at him, which he blocked with his Hardlight Shield. He circled it once, since both of his weapons were out of ammo, and then Jun, Emile, and Carter brought it down with grenades.

"Nice work. Up the grav lift, now!" Carter ordered.

The Chief was the first up, and snagged a Covenant Carbine from a nearby crate, blasting an Elite that challenged the team with seamless accuracy. He dropped the SAW that he had been carrying and took the Elite's Storm Rifle, using that as his primary weapon.

"Hey, Banshee! I'll cover you guys from the air!" James said as he claimed the idle Banshee.

Carter and Jun soon joined him as they found Banshees of their own, and the trio rained fuel rods down on the Shade turrets and Elites and ****fucking Grunts**** that got in the rest of the team's way. When all was quiet, the floor was littered with bodies, lots of Grunts, and pieces of Shade turrets, the Banshee trio disembarked and pushed their craft over the edge, and followed the rest deeper into the tower.

The door opened to a small room with a great view of the Didact's satellite. A terminal nearby gave Cortana access to the network.

"_Tapping into the spire's central net._"

The spires outside began to move to close the Didact in.

"_They're mine. Now to __**imprison them?**_"

The spires began to move erratically.

"What are you doing?" John demanded.

"_**Like he imprisoned his Prometheans!? Like Dr. Halsey imprisoned me?**_"

The spires fell out of view.

"_Chief?" _Cortana asked in her normal voice.

"His ship's online! They're leaving!" Carter said.

"_I'm sorry. I don't know what-_"

She cut herself off, and the Chief grabbed her data chip and slid it back in his helmet.

"Track those Liches. We can go across them to get to the Didact's ship." John told the AI.

"Wait, wait, wait. _Across _them?" Kat asked.

"Yes."

"_Umâ€¦ thereâ€¦ there are several Liches moving in formation towards the Didact's ship. We're only going to have one shot at this._"
Cortana told them.

"And it has to be perfect." Carter said as the room opened up more and allowed them out to get at the Covenant ships.

"_Okayâ€¦ GO!_" Cortana shouted as the Spartans took off and jumped.

They spilt into three groups. The Chief took the middle Lich, James, Emile, and Kat jumped for the one on the right, and Jorge, Jun, and Carter hit the left-side ship. They all landed seamlessly, and dug their knives into the hulls to stop them from sliding off the ships. They hauled themselves up onto the hulls, and stabilized themselves.

"_Everyone okay?_" Carter asked.

"_Fine, Commander._" The Chief said.

"_We're good._" Emile reported.

"_Everyone's here, sir._" Jun said.

"_Cortana, what's happening?_" The Chief asked as he the Didact's ship coming back down.

"_I don't know. Hang on!_"

The satellite flew past, and the pressure threatened to rip the Spartans off the hulls.

"_Hold! Hold!_" Carter shouted.

"_Whoaâ€¦ That's a big fucking ship._" Emile said as they saw what the Didact's satellite was headed towards: a Forerunner cruiser, flanked by Liches.

Requiem opened for the Didact, and they left for the far reaches of space with the Spartans not far behind. A portal began to open in front of the fleet. A slipspace portal.

"_They're going to jump to slipspace. Get below deck!_" Cortana told them.

"_No time. Brace yourselves against the hulls, and start praying._" Carter instructed.

All of them did the first part, and the ships passed through the portal and went to slipspace.

****DONE! Finally! It is my hope to get this done before August 9****th****, since that is my birthday. And what better present than my first complete story? Well, that's the goal, anyway. Start flaming if I approach the deadline, and it's not done. Like on the seventh or so, okay? That is my challenge to all of you. Keep me on track! I have loads of other stories I'd like to start, and I need this one done ASAP.****

****Thanks!****

39. Chapter 39

Chapter 39: Composer

Near Halo installation 03 and Ivanoff Research Station.

A slipspace portal opened in the meteor belt, and the Didact's fleet came out, along with some unwelcome guests.

"_Everyone alright?_" John asked.

"_We're fine, Chief. Cortana, where are we?_" Carter asked.

"_Ivanoff Research Station. Installation 03._"

"_A Halo ring?_" Emile asked.

"_It's where Infinity found the coordinates for Requiem._"

"_Then why are they bypassing it?_" James asked.

"_Because the Composer's not __on__ the ring._"

They all saw the station, and knew that the Composer was there.

"_Well, what are we waiting for? That station's not going to save itself._"

All three teams secured their Liches, and brought them around towards the station.

"_This is UNSC Noble Team to base. Do you read?_" The Chief hailed.

"_Yes! I read you! This is Sandy Tillson of Ivanoff Research Station! We're under attack!_"

"_They're after a Forerunner artifact you took from the Halo ring._" James explained.

"_How do you know about that?_"

"_Doctor, I need you to protect that artifact until we arrive. Send whatever-_" The Chief began.

"_**Do you know what that condescending bitch said to me after our first game of chess?**_" Cortana demanded.

"_Cortanaâ€¦_" James began.

"_**Even I don't call him by name anymore.**_"

Everyone saw that the Chief's Lich was off course.

"_Correct your approach._" He instructed.

"_**Yes, well he also said he works better alone. I can see why you chose him, Catherine.**_"

"_Cortana!_"

"_**I'm your greatest achievement and you detest me!**_"

"_Pull up! NOW!_" The Chief shouted.

Too late. The Lich crashed into the station as the other two docked and the Spartans went out to find the Chief. They found him hauling himself to his feet amidst burning wreckage.

"You okay?" Carter asked him.

"Fine, Commander."

"Dr. Tillson, are you there?" The Chief hailed.

"_Oh, thank God. When your signal cut off I di-_"

"Doctor, listen to me, you have to issue the order to evacuate the station."

"_We've been trying! The Covenantâ€| they've already taken over the landing bays._"

"Send us your coordinates. We'll see what we can do about clearing an evac route on our way to you." Carter told her.

They scavenged whatever weapons they could, and the team was out. A marine was fighting a Jackal, and died with his Sticky Detonator in hand. Emile relieved him of it, and the Chief took point, scanning with his MA5D for targets. The saddest part was that there were more dead humans than aliens. As they entered the docking bay, a marine was tackled by an unarmed Jackal and clawed and chewed to death.

"They're killing everybody!" A scientist shouted as he and a companion ran.

The air was filled with MA5D fire, as that was the primary weapon that the team had found. They made their way closer to the bays, killing any aliens that got in their way.

"What can we do to keep the Covenant out?" Jorge asked.

"T_he Harbormaster controls can erect a barricade over the bay, but we'll have to locate them._" Cortana answered.

"Found 'em!" Emile said as he pointed to a console near the bay doors.

They were impeded by a pair of Elites, which were taken care of by Carter and his scavenged DMR. The Chief ran to the console and raised the barricades.

"_Doctor Tillson, Bay Seven is secured and we're moving towards your position now._" Cortana reported.

"_Really? Oh, that's incredible! Thank you!_"

The door to the next area opened up, and the Chief immediately grabbed the charging Elite and shoved a frag grenade in its mouth. He threw it to the ground, and it blew up, killing the Jackals beside it, too. The security personnel inside turned and saw the Chief.

"Spartan? How many of you are there?" One asked as they poured lead into the Covenant on the other side of the room.

"Seven." Carter answered as the rest of the team came in guns blazing.

"Holy shit! That's Noble Team!" Another shouted.

"We got this, boys! Keep firing!"

The Chief led the group through the room, clearing out the light Covenant defense. As they ascended a staircase, that scanning beam swept through the room.

"_Didact doesn't know where the Composer is! Just that it's on the station._" Cortana told them.

"Then we need to find it first. Move up!" Carter ordered.

Up the stairs they went, slaughtering Grunt after Grunt as they went. More Grunts at the top, supported by a pair of Jackals and Elites in gold armor. The Grunts were toast in seconds, and the Jackals each took a knife to the face courtesy of Emile, while the Elites gave the Chief and Carter some trouble, running whenever their shields went down. Jorge withered them down with a stolen machine gun, and the team went through, their security allies staying behind to secure the area. Another scanning beam swept the station as a scientist freaked out in front of the Spartans.

"Help us! A pair of Hunters forced their way in! Take these! They're calibrated for heavy armor. Please! Help them!"

"We'll get them out of there. I promise." Carter said as each of the team, minus James, attached a thruster pack plug to their armor.

"Hunters, huh? This should be good." Emile said, loading his shotgun and cocking it dramatically.

"Emile, you and the Chief are in first. James, Jorge, you go next, draw their fire. I have a plan. Hand me a Stick Detonator." Carter instructed.

Emile gave the Commander his, and then followed the Chief in. They got the first Hunter's attention while James and Jorge got the second. As they flew around the room with their thruster packs, Carter and Jun came in with Sticky Detonators, firing and reloading as fast as they could. The Hunters died in a burst of fire as three sticky charges exploded on both.

"_Spartans, are you okay? It sounds like the end of the world out there!_" Dr. Tillson asked.

"Cortana? Door controls." The Chief instructed.

She merely spouted nonsense, another burst of rampancy.

"_Tillson's inside the door over there._" She finally responded.

Kat opened the door, and the team went in, finding Dr. Tillson on the other side.

"I desperately hope you know why all this is happening. Because, to be honest, my objectivity isn't doing me a whole lot of good right now. Hold on, I'll start us down."

She activated the elevator, and the team waited impatiently while it descended, slowly.

"The artifact you recovered was a Forerunner weapon. The Commander of that ship wants it back." The Chief explained.

Tillson was dumbfounded, according to her expression and voice.

"Wants it back? You don't think you can removeâ€¦| It can't leave this

station. You know that right?"

"Tell that to the Didact." James said.

"We don't have any choice, Doctor." The Chief added.

"It's not a matter of choice. It took three months, a-a-and the biggest starship the UNSC could throw at it just to relocate it here. Unless you Spartans are a lot stronger than you look, it's not going anywhere."

"Except Hell." Emile commented quietly.

"Can you give Cortana access to the station's supply manifest?" Carter asked.

"What for?" Tillson asked as she did so.

"If we can't move the Composer, we need to make sure the Didact can't either."

"Oh, wait—we have _years_ of work invested here—we"

"_Inventory lists seven excavation-grade HAVOK mines. Just one of those would turn this base into a piñata._" Cortana told them.

"I'm sorry, Doctor. Keep routing your people to the evac centers. Once we take care of the Composer, you won't have much time." James told her.

Tillson just fumbled around for words, looking utterly defeated before simply nodding.

"I'll—we make sure the nukes are primed so you can detonate them remotely." She said.

"Thank you. Let's move, Noble." Carter said.

"Maybe next time you rescue us—we you can give us more time to pack?" Tillson asked, not very much joking.

"Next time." The Chief said as they walked out.

They found the Composer in a huge area, with security guards all around it, mostly UNSC marines, but once or twice they saw an ODST. As they started walking, the room shook violently.

"Doctor, what was that?" The Chief asked.

"_The Covenant—we the Covenant shot down the first evac shuttle._"

"_The stations should be equipped with outer turrets. If we can reactivate them, I can program the station's defenses to provide cover for the evacuation._" Cortana told her.

"_Okay—we okay. I'll send you the coordinates._"

"Emile, Kat. Go get the turrets, Jorge and Jun, you and I will secure transport out of here. James, you stay here with the Chief. Keep the

Composer safe, alright?" Carter instructed.

"Got it."

As the Spartans went their ways, the Chief and James stayed where they were, surveying the defenses and preparing for the Didact's inevitable assault.

"So if that thing fires, the rest of the team is screwed. You know that, right?" James asked.

"I know. That's why I told Carter to split us up."

"Oh. This seems like the old days. Spartans against everything the Covenant could throw at us. Defending against impossible odds."

"Yeah."

You impress me, Humans. Your singular valor will be preserved and studied, once your Composition has been completed. The Didact told them in their heads.

A few minutes later, another scanning beam swept through the station.

"_Maybe the Great and Powerful Didact shouldn't misplace his things!_" Cortana said snidely.

"_Cortana, we're at the defense console._" Emile reported.

"_Good. Have Kat set up a remote link._"

"_Give me a minute._" Noble Two said.

"Dr. Tillson, are you there?" John hailed.

"_Yes, I'm here. Any luck?_"

"Cortana's bringing the defense grid online now."

As the guns roared to life, Cortana reported success.

"_I hear them. I'll broadcast the final evac orders._"

"_The nuke?_" Carter asked.

"_We're rigging it now. Meet us back upstairs. We'll help you get it to the artifact._"

"_Chief, if we actually pull this off and get back to Halsey, don't tell her how bad I got. Please?_" Cortana asked.

"I won't say a thing."

"Me either." James added.

Covenant started flooding in a few minutes later.

"They found it."

"_Hang in there, Chief. We're almost there. ETA one mike._" Emile reported.

"_Stop them, Chief! You can't let them tell him it's here!_" Cortana told them.

An Elite suddenly exploded as a red laser pierced its face.

"Backup's here!" Emile shouted as he fired again with his Spartan Laser.

"_We've got a Pelican rigged and ready to go. Just say the word, and we'll be there._"

"Dr. Tillson, the Composer's location is compromised! You've got to get the nuke down here!" James told her.

"_It's- It's not ready yet!_"

"Ready or not, we need it now!" Emile said.

More Covenant started pouring in, soon supported by Ghosts, Banshees and Wraith tanks. The Team managed to find some Mantis' and made short work of the enemies.

"_Damn! I love this thing!_" James said.

"_You say that about anything that can kill a Wraith tank._" Emile retorted.

"_Well, anything that can kill a Wraith tank is pretty cool in my book._"

More and more Covenant came in, but the Didact and his Promethean warriors were absent from the fighting.

"_Chief! What's your status?_" Jorge hailed.

"Under heavy attack, but we can handle it, just hold back, we'll signal when we're ready for evac."

"Dr. Tillson, where's the warhead? Dr. Tillson?"

"_Head back to the elevator platform, I'll keep trying to raise her._"

"Emile, Kat. Signal for evac. We'll get the warhead ready."

"_We're on our way._" Carter replied.

The Pelican was in and the rest of Noble entered as James and John went for the elevator.

"_The HAVOK mines will be in one of the cargo bays. Start us up._"

The elevator started up as the atrium outside started to come apart.

"_IMMENSE CASIMIR WAVE BUILDING JUST OUTSIDE THE ATRIUM!_" Cortana shouted.

"MOVE!" James shouted as a piece of metal slammed into the glass viewport of the elevator, stopping them dead.

Suddenly, the entire atrium lit up with a bright orange, and the Spartans saw the Didact's ship outside.

Then the Composer started to shake and move.

"What's he doing?" John asked.

"Ho. Ly. Shit.

The Composer was lifted out of the station and pulled towards the Didact's ship.

"Cortana, see if you can raise Dr. Tillson. Get me a status on the rest of the station." The Chief instructed.

"â€|_I can't believe he did that._"

"Cortana, we need that info!" James told her.

"Look. Don't think about the Didact. Don't think about the Composer. Only focus on finding me Tillson." John added.

"_Tillson. Sandra K. Female. Fifty one years of age. Doctor of Archaeology, Pegasi Institute. Got her! Biosignature stable on 350-Level. B-Deck._"

"Thank you, Cortana." The Chief said.

"Commander, get out of here! The Didact has the Composer! He could use it at any time. Go! Get away from this station, NOW!" James shouted.

"_That's insane! We're coming to get you._"

"Negative, Commander. We need to get that warhead. You need to get out of here. We'll be fine. I promise." The Chief said.

The elevator was already going up, and soon reached Tillson's location.

"They've compromised the station's hull." Tillson said to other scientists as they approached.

"The Didact's taken the Composer! Get these people to the evac centers!" The Chief instructed as he put Cortana into the system.

"Taken?! Taken how?" Tillson asked.

"Tap the flight deck. Find us something that can carry a payload." James said, ignoring Tillson for now.

"Waitâ€| something's happeningâ€|" Tillson said.

"Shit. CARTER! HAUL ASS! MOVE! GET OUT OF HERE! NOW!" James shouted.

The Composer was warming up. The Didact was going to fire it.

"Cortana, can you access the station's defense systems?" John asked.

"They're not responding." She answered.

As Cortana kept trying, the Composer kept spinning up, getting closer to fire-ready status.

"Cortana." James said.

"It'sâ€¦"

The Composer fired, and the sight was not a pretty one. The scientists were literally disintegrated right where they stood, ripped apart layer by layer. The Chief and James were only knocked out, their armor failing as they fell.

Silence dominated the station. Suddenly, boots clattered on the deck as the rest of Noble Team rushed in, looking for their comrades.

"Chief! James!" Carter shouted.

They both were out cold where they had fallen. Then the Chief woke up, and James not two seconds later. They both came up to a knee slowly, to the amazement of Cortana.

"Are you okay?" She asked them.

"I monitored the data pulse. I could hear themâ€¦ what was left of themâ€¦"

"We need to move." The Chief simply said.

"_Damn it, James! Do you read!?!_" Emile hailed.

"Emile? We read you. We're on 350-Level. B-Deck.

"These people are gone." Cortana continued.

"And more will follow if the Didact reaches Earth." The Chief said.

The rest of Noble came in a few minutes later.

"What the hell happened there?" Carter asked.

"The Composer. The Didact fired it." James explained.

"Then how are youâ€¦?"

"Long story." The Chief said.

"They'll pair you with another AI. Maybe even another Cortana model if Halsey lets them." Cortana said.

"That's not going to happen." The entire team said at the same time.

"It won't be me. You know that, right?"

The team was silent, thinking of losing a companion like Cortana. She had been with them through thick and thin, and she was like another Noble to them.

"Spinning up Broadwords in Hangar C. Whatever the Librarian did to you two obviously worked-"

"Cortana." The Chief began.

"It's not over. Not yet." He continued.

"Not yet." Cortana echoed.

The six Broadsword fighters, with the Chief's loaded with the nuke, left the station, burning stars to find the Didact's fleet.

"Status report." The Chief asked.

"_Noble One, good to go._"

"_Noble Two, all systems green._"

"_Noble Three, stable._"

"_Noble Four and Five. All good here._"

"_Noble Six. All good here. Let's go kill us a Forerunner._"

40. Chapter 40: The End

Chapter 40: Midnight

****This be it! The end of SND. Never thought I'd get this far. I'll start rewriting soon, maybe condense a few of the earlier chapters, update the style of my writing, but nothing major. Okay! time to go kill a Forerunner.****

As the Didact's ship flew through space towards Earth, six UNSC Broadsword fighters streaked in behind it.

"_Approaching the Didact's ship in two hundred kilometers._" Cortana announced.

"Form up on me." The Chief instructed.

"_Roger._" Carter responded.

Five of the fighters closed in on the lead one.

"_Once we get onboard, we'll need to find the bridge._"

A Slipspace portal opened up in front of the Didact's ship.

"_He's on the move. Again._" Emile said.

"_The fighter's shields aren't rated for Slipspace!_" Cortana told them.

"_No. But the Didact's are._" Kat said.

"Go. Get under those shields before he hits Slipspace. We should be able to ride it out safely."

The fighters opened up on their throttles and shot off towards the Didact's ship. As it hit the portal, the shields flared, and the Broadwords were in the envelope.

"_Nice work, Noble. We're in._" Carter reported as the ship hit slipspace.

"_Broadword's hull integrity is stable. We'll be safe as long as we stay below the Didact's shields._" Cortana told them.

"Where's the Composer?" The Chief asked.

"_Close. I should be able to guide us to it._"

You have not been Composed. Such inoculation should not have been possible. The Didact said.

"_Locking onto his transmissionâ€¦ he's at the Composer. We can take them both out at once._"

The Broadwords dipped and weaved around obstacles, and shot turrets that deployed to take them down.

"_Whoa! Shit. The whole damn ship is rearranging itself!_" Emile said as his Broadword narrowly evaded a moving piece of hull.

"Open stretch. Hit the thrusters." The Chief instructed.

"_Cherenkov radiation fluctuating. We're coming out of Slipspace._"

As if on cue, Earth came into view above the ship.

"_At current velocity, hostile will achieve Earth orbit in approximately four minutes._" FLEETCOM Watch announced.

"_Roger. Battle Group Dakota, close on the Forerunner vessel._"

That was _Infinity_. They had made it back to Earth.

"_Infinity must have warned them._" Cortana told them.

"_Sierra-259 to Infinity. Captain Del Rio, do you read?_" Carter hailed.

"_Spartans! It's Lasky. You read?_"

"Affirmative, sir. Where's the Captain?" The Chief asked.

"_FLEETCOM didn't take too kindly to his abandoning you on Requiem. I'm afraid I'll have to do._"

"The Didact's got the Composer. We're in Broadsword fighters carrying a Havok-grade payload, on approach to deliver."

"_I'll see if we can grease the wheels a bit for you. All ships, prepare to engage!_"

"_Soâ€| Captain Lasky, maybe?_" James asked over the team comm.

"_Doesn't matter right now. Let's just find the Composer and stop the Didact._"

The fighters flew in perfect formation through a trench filled with defense turrets, seamlessly destroying all of them as they went.

"_The Battle Group's moving to intercept, but at the rate the Didact's ship is advancing, he'll reach the wire in T-minus two minutes._" Lasky reported.

"Commander, direct all your ships to the Composer."

"_Copy that, Chief._"

The next area was a small corridor filled with power couplings that the fighters had to fly through.

"_Time it right, Spartans. Go._" Carter ordered.

"Break formation." The Chief added.

"_Orbital Defense Command, this is FLEETCOM. Hostile inbound. Proceed to Condition Red._"

"_This is Earth Orbital Defense. MAC defenses ineffective against enemy vessel. It's still approaching._"

"_Infinity to FLEETCOM. Battle Group has reached the Didact's ship._"

"_Captain Lasky, you are clear to engage._"

The Spartans kept flying for the Composer, bobbing and weaving around turrets and moving pieces of hull. The hull became a tunnel which got slowly smaller.

"Single file. Hit the thrusters." The Chief instructed.

"_On your six._" James reported.

They came out to a pitched battle between Battle Group Dakota and the Didact's ship.

"_There it is. NO WAIT!_" Cortana said.

"_Infinity_, the Didact just closed off our entrance to the

Composer."

"_We can try punching a hole in that hull plating, but Infinity won't be able to get a clear shot with all that flak._" Lasky reported.

"We'll take care of the guns. Four groups. Go." The Chief said.

They split off to take care of the guns.

"_Gun one down._" Emile reported.

"_Gun two down._" Carter reported.

"Gun three down."

"_Copy. Weapons! Prepare firing solution! I promised to get Noble Team inside that ship, and I am not about to let them down!_"

"_Gun fourâ€¦ down._" Jun said.

"That's the last one. _Infinity, _you're clear." The Chief reported.

"_Roger that, Chief. You guys might want to back up a little._" Lasky told them.

"_Main batteryâ€¦ Fire!_"

Twin energy projectors, like those on CCS-class battleships of the Covenant, streaked from the warship to the Didact's ship, and slammed right into the shield preventing Noble access to the Composer.

"Clean hit. We're proceeding to insertion." The Chief reported.

"_Acknowledged. We'll be on station if you need us. Make sure to give the Didact our regards._"

"_Infinity out._"

The six fighters burned starlight into the ship, rushing to the Composer as the hull started to close in on them.

"_Look out!_" Cortana yelled.

The fighters bobbed, weaved, barrel-rolled, and streaked onward.

"_I have a really bad feeling about this!_" James yelled as the hull closed in almost to the point of crushing them.

The fighters were crushed, but the Spartans were fine, as only the back parts were crushed.

"_Now what do we do?_" Cortana asked.

The Chief pulled the warhead off of the nuke on his Broadsword and attached it to his back.

"Plan B." The Chief said as he led the Spartans off.

"_Chief, I know I'm supposed to know what to do, butâ€|_" Cortana started.

"We'll have to deploy the warhead manually. How and where?" The Chief demanded.

"_I always know what to do. __**I always know what to do!**_"

"_Just give me a second._"

"Keep scanning for the Composer, we'll figure it out on the way." Carter said.

"Just like the old days." Emile said.

"Wouldn't be a Noble mission if it were easy." James added.

Promethean fliers inhabited the next room, and spawned a turret to stop them. It didn't stand a chance, and neither did the fliers. More fliers equals more turrets, and all went down as the team rampaged through, trying desperately to get to the Composer before the Didact could use it.

Where reason does not stop you, perhaps force can at least delay you.

The Promethean Knight that warped in front of them suddenly turned green, instead of orange.

"You know, for a Forerunner, you sure are forgetful!" James shouted as his armor pulsed and his shields cycled.

"What did you do?" Carter asked.

"Embraced my heritage, tapped into the Domain."

"So you can control the Prometheans?" The Chief asked.

"Not really. Only a few at a time."

"Better than nothing. Let's move."

With the help of a few Promethean Knights, the team pushed on and to a gravity lift deeper into the ship.

"_**I won't leave you. I promise**_." Cortana said in a bout of rampancy.

"_Still good for something, I guess. I detected an energy signature ahead. I think it's a transit system like on Requiem. Find a way to access it._"

They went through the next door, and found themselves in a large room occupied by a large platform to the team's right, and an AI pedestal on their platform.

"_I'll try to get us to the Composer. Put me in the system._"

Is this the secret you've kept from me? Thisâ€¦ evolved ancilla?

The Didact knew about Cortana now.

"Didact knows I'm in the system. Hurry! Go!" She told them.

They all went through the portal, without Cortana's chip. They came out in a small corridor defended by just a pair of Promethean dogs.

"_Portalâ€¦_" Cortana said as they approached another terminal.

I sense your malfunctioning companion, Humans. And yet she eludes me.

They came out on the platform adjacent to the one they had been on originally.

"_**Can'tâ€¦ fightâ€¦ Didactâ€¦ andâ€¦ myselfâ€¦ simultaneouslyâ€¦**_"

"_Opening another portalâ€¦_" Cortana told them.

They fought their way up, with James controlling a pair of Knights, one of which had an Incineration Cannon, which made the fight a lot easier. They found the portal as James destroyed his Promethean allies.

"I hate doing that." He commented.

"Controlling them, or destroying them?" Carter asked.

"Both."

They went through the portal, and found a supply stash.

"_I can't control what my processes are doing. The stronger threads keep reprioritizing themselves over me._"

"What about the Didact?" The Chief asked.

"_I can't hide much longerâ€¦ I'll try to get you to the Composer again._"

They all grabbed new weapons, and went through the portal on their left. They came out, and James immediately charged forward, wielding a Covenant Gravity Hammer.

"JAMES! SMASH!" He said as he slammed the hammer into a Knight below them.

"_Portal open! Far side of the room._" Cortana told them.

James led the way with his Gravity Hammer, recruiting another Knight to their cause as they went, and letting it kill its comrades while they went through.

_You impress me, half-breed. You can overwrite my control of the

Knights. I applaud your progress. But it shall soon come to an end._
The Didact said to James.

"Bite me, asshole."

"Where are you?" Carter asked Cortana.

"_The Didact's cloaking the Composer from me._"

They dealt with the light enemy resistance, and then started off through the walkways.

"_Reinforcements! Hold them off while I locate the Composer!_"

More dogs came in, and James smashed them with his Hammer while the rest blazed them with Forerunner or Covenant weapons.

"_I've taken control of the local defense turrets._" Cortana told them.

More and more dogs, or Crawlers, as James learned from the Domain, poured in, and almost overwhelmed the Spartans.

Almost.

The Chief jumped into the air and slammed one to the ground as it leaped up to their platform, crushing another in the process. The rest went down under an inhuman amount of firepower from the rest of the team.

"_I got it. I've locked him out of the system, but I don't know for how long._"

The Chief grabbed Cortana's chip and the team took off for the portal.

"_The Composer's on the other side of that portal._"

On the other side of the portal was a gravity lift that took them to a small platform that connected to the Composer. But the in-between was non-traversable.

"How do we get over there?" Carter asked.

"_Conveyor lift, end of the ramp. If we time it right, our momentum should carry us right through the low gravity._"

They ran and hit the lift, and started flying.

"_Once that warhead is primed, the window for getting out of here will be slim._" Cortana told them.

"We know." The Chief answered.

"_And soâ€¦ you come at last._ The Didact told them.

"_Activity! Slipspace event building under the Composer!_"

"He's powering it up!" Emile said.

The second they landed, they took off, running and gunning their way through. When they found the Composer, they also saw the Didact inside.

"_The Didact's shielded himself inside the Composer. The nuke won't do us any good unless we disable that barrier. Find me a terminal._"

The Chief put Cortana into the system via an AI terminal, and she hesitated for a second.

"I've got to do something you're not going to like."

She screamed and two of her split off from the main.

"What the-" Emile began.

The Chief pulled the chip as the clones started dividing.

"What was that?" James asked.

"_I ejected my rampant personality spikes into the system. If I do that at each of those beams, the copies can overwhelm the Composer's shielding._"

They hit another lift, and as they flew, a platform materialized in front of them.

"_Get ready!_"

The fight was hard, and frequently came to a standstill as the Spartan's shields recharged. The Prometheans here were much stronger and harder than anywhere else that they had fought, and that posed a problem for the Spartans. They activated a lightbridge to go across to the next beam, and handled the Crawlers with relative ease.

"_Now, before they send reinforcements._" Cortana said as another terminal came up in front of them.

The Chief put her chip in, and she split her rampant personalities as the Spartans waited impatiently. When she was done, the Chief quickly grabbed the chip, put it back in his helmet, and they all left for the next beam.

"_That's it. It's working._" She reported.

"_You humans sought the Didact. You will have him._" The Didact said.

"_His ship's in range! Once the barrier is down, you'll need to get the nuke in there fast._" Cortana told them.

They went for the next beam, bypassing all the enemies to get to the platform, and repeated the process over again. Eliminating the Prometheans little by little, with help from James' new Knights, and then activated the lightbridge to get across. When all the enemies were dead, the terminal rose, and the Chief put Cortana into the system once more. This time, the barrier went down.

And yet, still you fail. The Didact said as he activated the Composer.

The beam went straight down, decimating the city of New Phoenix. As the Chief went to recover Cortana's data chip, a blast of hardlight struck the terminal, disintegrating it and the AI's chip.

"CORTANA!" The Chief shouted.

"Chief! We have to go! We need to get the nuke to the core! NOW!" Carter shouted as the rest of the team left.

He was searching the pedestal's remains, trying to find some remnant of his AI. There was none.

Cortana was gone. And she wasn't coming back.

He heard whispers as he ran.

Get to the core. Destroy it.

That had to be Cortana, the Chief pressed on. For her.

I'll always take care of you. Cortana whispered.

"**Prime the nuke. Save them. Destroy the Composer.**" Cortana said.

That interference, concurrent with Cortana's rampancy, appeared on the Chief's HUD, along with a message.

It's alright, but you need to hurry.

The team rode the gravity lift up to the Didact, and James and the Chief approached together while the others stayed back. When they looked up, the Didact was gone, so they continued walking.

"You persist too long after your own defeat." The Didact said from everywhere, and yet he was nowhere to be seen.

As they continued on, the Didact appeared behind them.

"Come then, Warriors. Have your resolution."

Both of the Spartans turned as one, and the Didact threw the Chief telekinetically, along with the nuke, while James engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Didact, who easily beat the Spartan.

"You are weak, Humans."

The Chief was instantly up, and ran for the nuke, but the Didact caught him with his telekinetics.

"So misguided." The Forerunner said as he held John in the air, and had James pinned under his boot.

Then a shot rang out, and the Didact lurched over. Jun stood tall, with his SRS-99 Sniper rifle smoking at the barrel.

"That shot wasn't misguided." Carter said.

"High-velocity, armor piercing rounds. They can take the hat off an Elite at two thousand yards." Emile said.

"And they ain't cheap." Jun added.

The Didact kept his grip on John, but James was able to get up, and get the nuke as the rest of the team closed in on the wounded Forerunner.

"Humanity's imprisonment was a kindness."

He began to crush The Master Chief telekinetically, and then looked around as so many clones of Cortana appeared on the bridge.

"In that case, you won't mind if we return the favor." The clones said as one.

"Your compassion for mankind is misplaced." The Didact proclaimed.

"I'm not doing this for mankind!"

They all turned into little sprite-like dots of light, and imprisoned the Didact with hardlight restraints. The Chief fell, barely catching the edge of the bridge, and the team helped him up.

The Chief ran for the Didact, and slammed a grenade onto his chest, and he was slapped away. The Didact struggled out of Cortana's restraints, and telekinetically lifted the Chief, only to be slammed in the gut by James, who went over the edge with the Didact.

"JAMES!"

They fell just outside the Composer's beam, so at least James wouldn't be Composed. They all saw the flash as the pulse grenade went off, killing the Didact. The Chief crawled to the nuke, seeing as the rest of the team was still shocked by James' sacrifice, and he armed it. Then he looked at Earth, and then at the rest of the team. Carter nodded, indicating that he should do it.

The Chief lifted his arm, and using every bit of strength he had, slammed his hand into the nuke, detonating it and blowing up the Composer.

When his vision cleared, he was on one knee, alongside the other members of Noble Team, minus James. They all stood, and looked around.

"Cortana." The Chief asked.

Silence as they stood up.

"Cortana, do you read?"

Still nothing.

"Cortana, come in."

They all turned to a humming noise, and saw the AI walking towards them. She was as tall as them now, and smiling.

"Howâ€|?"

Oh, I'm the strangest thing you've seen all day?" She asked.

The other Spartans stayed silent. This was a very personal moment for the Chief, and they would let him have it. Not as if there was much choice, as they disappeared a second later. But the Chief didn't notice.

"But if we're hereâ€|"

"It worked. You did it. Just like you always do."

The Chief looked around, searching for an exit.

"So how do we get out of here?" He finally asked.

"I'm not coming with you this time." Cortana said after a moment's pause.

"What?!" The Chief asked, shocked.

"Most of me is down there. I only held enough back to get you and the others off the ship."

"No! That's notâ€| we go together!"

"It's already done."

"_I am not leaving you here_." The Chief enunciated.

"Johnâ€|" She said as she put a hand on his chest.

"I've waited so long to do that." She continued.

"It was my job to take care of you." John said.

"We were supposed to take care of each other. And we did."

"Cortanaâ€| please."

She started walking back, signifying that this was the end.

"Waitâ€|" John urged.

"Welcome home, John." She simply said.

And then she was gone. The Chief held his gaze as the ship around him crumbled and tore itself apart.

And then he too was gone. And a part of him would always be dead, along with Cortana.

As he floated through space, John couldn't think of anything but his

lost AI. Then a searchlight hit him, and a radio broadcast came through.

"_Infinity Actual? Pelican Nine-Sixer. We found him_."

He was brought aboard the Pelican and it landed on Infinity. When he got out, the soldiers on the deck saluted, and the rest of Noble met him at the end. They said nothing, but conveyed their feelings through their body language. Sagged shoulders, Slumped heads, and deep breaths said that they all felt similar to the Chief, but nothing like he was feeling.

"Chiefâ€|"

They all turned and saw James, in scorched armor, missing his prosthetic arm, and with multiple holes in his visor and armor plates.

"I'm so sorry. I know it doesn't' help, but we're here. I'm here." He said.

Infinity Observation Deck A-3.

Three days after the Didact's defeat.

The Chief stared out at the human homeworld, Earth, silently as Captain Lasky walked up.

"Mind if I join you?" He asked the Spartan.

"Of course not, sir."

"At ease, Chief. It feels kind of odd for you to call me sir."

The Captain stood beside the Spartan.

"Beautiful, isn't she? I don't get to see her often enough."

Silence from the Spartan.

"I grew up on New Harmony, attended Corbulo Military Academy. Never saw Earth in person until I was an adult, butâ€| I still think of her as home."

Yet more silence from the Spartan.

"You don't talk much, do you?"

Lasky paused, waiting for the Chief to answer, but he didn't.

"Chief, I won't pretend to know how you feel. I mean, I've lost people I cared about, but nothing like what you're going through."

"It's our duty as soldiers to protect humanity." John finally said.

"You say that like soldiers and humanity are two different things. Soldiers aren't machines. We're just people."

The Chief was silent once more, only turning a bit to look at Lasky.

"I'll let you have the deck to yourself." Lasky said.

The Captain walked away, and the Chief kept staring at Earth.

"She said that to me once, about being a machine." He said to no one.

Promise me you'll figure out which of us is the machine. A whisper in the air told him.

****Every Journey, big, small, or Great, begins with a single step. This has been a hell of a ride. Thanks for sticking around, or if you're only just getting into it, thanks for having faith in me. You guys kept me going when I really didn't want to keep going, and you stayed with me even when I may have pissed you off a little bit.****

****Thank you. From the bottom of my heart. Thank you.****

****You are my Cortanas. You kept me going, watched my six, and helped me out when I needed it, and even when I didn't need it.****

****Now this road ends. But there are other roads that this one connects to.****

****I will be writing a sequel, if I buy an Xbox One and H5: Guardians. There will be no preview, as it will probably be wildly invalidated by Halo 5, and as such, I will be focusing on A New Battleground, and a few more books I'm going to start.****

****Extra special thank you goes to Winter's Sentinel for beta-reading. You've been an amazing help.****

****Next story will go up in a few days, or so. If you're interested in seeing it before then, give me a PM.****

****I'll see you all on the other side.****

****Greg.****

****They call me 'AlphaGuardian'.**_**

****Remember me.**_**

End
file.